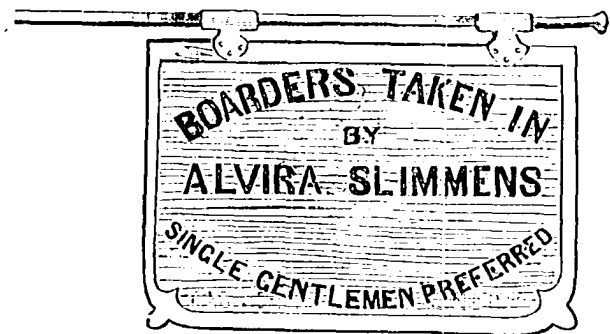


MISS SLIMMENS'S BOARDING-HOUSE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE TALLOW FAMILY."

(Continued from page 36.)



CHAPTER III.

HER OPINION OF WOMEN BOARDERS IN GENERAL.

THE autograph of the breakfast-table! I'm going to be the autograph of my own breakfast-table, gentlemen. If our sex don't begin to assume responsibilities *sometime*, I'm sure I don't know when they'll be recorded to them; and, for my part, I feel fully equal to the task. I trust there will ever be a literary atmosphere hanging over this dining-room. Fried onions, Mr. Porter, those are fried onions, a very healthy breakfast dish, indeed. I shall do all that I can to promote the discursive tendencies of the young gentlemen about me. I'm interested in all the leading topics of the day, and nothing would give me more glowing satisfaction than to see them successfully promoted. I have thought of instituting a debating society in the house, the questions to be argued while we're at meals. It's very promotive of digestion to talk a good deal while you're eating. What's that, Mr. Little? And very saving of vittals? Well, now, you do put the queerest construction upon my conduct, which I shouldn't put up with from some, only I know you're so full of jokes that they just run over without your knowing it. What do you think of gastronomy, Mr. Greyson? It's a science very much talked about since Le Mountain went up in his balloon. Gas is taking the place of candles in most cities. Dear me! I wish they'd introduce it into Pennyville! It would have a very imposing effect to see the rows of lamps all lit up along Main Street, of a dark night. I should love to

promenade beneath their bewitching influence, hanging upon the protecting arm of one of the sterner sex. Methinks it would awaken all the poetry of my inner nature. I should admire to have a gas-burner in my bodeor. Do you recall last evening, Mr. Barker, just at that peculiar moment how provoking it was to have to snuff the candle? If I'd have been you, I'd have let it gone without snuffing. I broke a guitar-string, I was so put out. You are sure there's no need of any gas in this house? Why so, Mr. Little? Now, you *must* tell me, or I'll never forgive you. Oh, you saucy creature, you—he! he! he!—you wish to flatter me! I suppose my eyes *are* rather bright—I have been told so, so often—but they are not quite so luminous as all that comes to.

I had application for two new boarders yesterday, but I told them I was full, for I would not have taken them in for ten dollars a week apiece. Why? Because they were women, young women, and school-teachers, at that! Didn't I see through their wanting to board here as easy as through a pane of glass? Humph! there never was a young lady school-teacher yet that wasn't wanting to get married. They knew that this was a favorite boarding-house for gentlemen—that there were several marriageable young men here, and they thought, no doubt, there would be fine times. If they had of had any modesty, they wouldn't have wanted to board where there were so many men, as long as they had no protectors, no father nor brother to see after them. One of them evidently thought herself very hand-

some. They ain't the first I've turned away. Women boarders are a pest and a nuisance. You never found anybody that was *willing* to have 'em, though some is obliged to take them, that's got families to support, which, I'm thankful to say, I haven't. They are everlasting in the way; their noses are in everything. If there's ever a time or an hour when you wish they'd keep their rooms, that's the very minute they choose to leave 'em. They spy out everything, and they're everywhere. Supposing them two teachers had a' come here and taken rooms—of what earthly use do you suppose my bodoor would a' been to me? Would it have been mine or theirs most, do you think? Humph! their slounces and their curls would fill up every corner; they'd have my guitar, and be breaking the strings, and screaming "Sleeping, I dreamed, love," or "I have not loved lightly," until I was distracted. Or, supposing it was a married woman, of course she'd have a "darling"—a squalling, angry, cross, impudent little thing, with molasses on its mouth and dirty fingers, breaking my dishes at table, down in the kitchen seven times a day for "a piece," and getting grease on my parlor carpet. His mother wouldn't want to allow anything for his board, but he'd eat more than two common-sized men, and she'd want the privilege of doing his washing in the laundry, and clear-starching her own muslins once a fortnight. She'd be asking the cook all kinds of questions, and peeking into the cellar, and the sugar-barrel, and the pantry after musty pork, or cockroaches, or hashed meat; and if she should discover a dead fly on the dining-room floor, she'd have cramps in her stomach and lose her appetite for a month. My girl would have to trot to the door to let in all her callers, and if I'd any company myself, she'd be sure to drop in and make herself agreeable as long as they stayed; and about once a week she'd have her three sisters, or her father and mother, or her dear Cousin John to tea, always, of course, when the table was crowded. I hate and I despise 'em! I'll have to be worse off than I am now before I take women boarders for a living. I'd rather bleach bunnits and live in a brimstun-barrel, like old Diagonal in his tub!

Speaking of bunnits puts you in mind to ask the meaning of that shadow of one you see on my sign-board? Ahem! you must know, Mr. Greyson, what, being a new-comer, you were not aware of, that a relative of mine was once in the millenary business, and, as I had the sign already constructed, I thought it

an excellent piece of economy to have it repainted for my present occupation; but the painter hasn't put on enough coats, or else it's struck through.

Why do I say "Single gentlemen preferred?" Oh, Mr. Little, you're enough to puzzle an inexperienced person like myself. If it wasn't for those black eyes of yours—but a woman can never be offended long, with them smiling her into good-nature. Of course, if a man wasn't a single gentleman, he'd be married; and if he was married, he would have a wife, and would be wanting to get her boarded, too, and I've just expressed my sentiments upon that subject. That's the reason, the *only* reason. My breast is innocent of any other. I *could* have no other motive. Single gentlemen are quiet and nice, and pay their board-bill without quarrelling. They are *never* in the way. I'd rather they'd be about than not.

It's a pleasure to me to do a favor to one of the opposite sex who has no mother or sister to go to when he wants advice or sympathy. To bathe the aching brow; to whisper consolation to the drooping spirits; to pillow the weary head, so to speak in a figurative sense; to cling like the ivy to the oak. How *beautiful* is woman's mission! Gentlemen, if you suffer, let me know.

More milk, did you say? There isn't another drop in the pitcher. I don't know what becomes of it, unless that girl throws it away. I take three pints a day, stiddy, and that, for a family of nine persons, *ought* to do. Will I ask Bridget to bring in some more fish? There's no more broiled, Mr. Porter. I've known *half* a mackerel to furnish the table for eight persons; but we had a whole one this morning, and hash besides. I guess Bridget got it too fresh.

What's become of Miss Adams? She *prefers* to take her meals by herself, I presume, since she insists upon doing it. But you'll see her this evening; which reminds me, gentlemen—stop a moment, Mr. Greyson, if you'll be so good—which reminds me to say that I shall expect you *all* to consider yourselves engaged to me—for this evening, I mean. Oh, Mr. Little! he! he! he! of course, I didn't mean *that*! I am going to give a party—not a very large one, but most of the aristocracy of Pennyville will be invited—in honor of my birthday. This is my birth-day, gentlemen; but I'll not expect your congratulations until this evening. How many strokes of the lash am I entitled to? Oh, Mr. Little! get out! get o-u-t! *Incer* was saluted by one of the masculine sex, never! You

sha'n't kiss me! you sha'n't! I'll die first. Mr. Porter, Mr. Greyson, rescue me, oh-h-h! Now you needn't say that, you naughty, naughty man! You *were* a-trying to kiss me; you know you were. And you'd have made out in a minute more, if you'd only kept trying. Faint heart never won fair lady. Seriously now, how old am I? Guess. "Fifty-four!" Do you mean to insult me, Mr. Smith, or are you but in jest? "Seventeen." That's almost as far the *other* way, Mr. Little. "Twenty-five." Yes, Mr. Porter, you've guessed it *exactly*. I'm twenty-five to-day. I intend now to lay aside all my youthful follies, and behave like one of our older young ladies. I suppose I may *almost* consider myself an old maid! But I intend to yield gracefully. A person who has refused more offers than she is years of age can afford to allow herself to be called an old maid. I am willing the whole world should know my precise age. But I'll not retain you any longer this morning. There'll be dinner as usual, to-day, but no tea, as I'll have refreshments this evening, and will be arranging the tables at that time.

(*Night.*) Well, Dora, the party went off splendidly, I think. Not an incident to mar the occasion. The chicken-salad didn't go 'round; but I guess nobody noticed it, as there was plenty of cold ham, and enough left to last the boarders three days, which'll save cooking.

My dress was very becoming, I'm sure, from the way that everybody looked at it; and Mr. Little whispered to me that he had never seen me looking so well. What a tormenting, saucy, fascinating young man he is! To confide to you the truth, I prefer him to all my other boarders, for all he says such wicked things. I like to see men a *little* wicked, don't you? It's so delicious not to know just how naughty they're going to dare to be. He come so near making out to kiss me this morning, right before all the others. I don't see what he give up for, just as he'd conquered my last remaining particle of resistance. What are you smiling at, Dora? Take this pin out of my back braids, and help me get off these ringlets. Lay them in the box there, careful; them cost me five dollars, besides the braids. It was very good of Mr. Barker to play on his flute so much; it's so convenient to have a musical deficient in the family. He's rather stiff in his manners, and awful humbly; but he's remarkably obliging about his music. I got pitched rather high to sing "Twilight Dews," but he carried me through with his flute.

I'm of the opinion that the party will pay. The eatables didn't cost very much, and none of the remnants will be wasted. I sha'n't have much cooking to do for several days. I've got one new boarder by it—that clerk in the shoe store—he asked me, this evening, if I'd any more accommodations, and said he'd like to board with me. You see it gives an air of sociability, such as young gentlemen like; and the bodoor, and the guitar, and me being so gay, and all. That's just what I give the party for. I hope Mr. Greyson wasn't put out. He went to bed before supper. These old widowers are so particular and dyspeptical! But he's rich, and he's genteel, and I don't mean to offend him. If things continue as they promise now, I sha'n't keep boarders all my life. I shall make all the money I can, while I do keep 'em, so as to be able to buy me a setting-out suitable to a merchant's wife. Will you hand me my night-cap? I must have some thicker ones made, for I'm getting the rheumatism in my head, taking off all my hair so of nights. Blow out the candle. Whew! how cold it's a-getting.

CHAPTER IV.

A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT.

DORA! Dora! Dora! wake up—wake up, I say! Don't you smell something burning? Wake up, child! Don't you smell fire? Good Lord! so do I. I thought I wasn't mistaken. The room's full of smoke. O dear! what'll we do? Don't stop to put on your petticoat. We'll all be burned to death. Fire! fire! fire! fire!

Yes there is! I don't know where! It's all over, our room's all in a blaze, and Dora won't come out till she gets her dress on. Mr. Little, you *sha'n't* go in—I'll hold you—you'll be killed, just to save that chit of a girl, when I—I—he's gone! rushed right into the flames! Oh, my house, my furniture, all my earnings! Can't anything be done? Fire! fire! fire! call the fire-engine, ring the dinner-bell. Be quiet! How can I be quiet? Yes it is, all in flames, I saw them myself. Where's my silver spoons? Oh, where's my teeth, and my silver soup-ladle? Let me be! I'm going out in the street before it's too late. Oh, Mr. Greyson, have you got water? have you found the place? are they bringing water?

Did you say the fire was out? Was that you that spoke, Mr. Little? I thought you were burned up, sure; and there's Dora, too. How did they get it out? My clothes-closet

was on fire, and the room, too? We would have been smothered in five minutes more, if we hadn't waked up? But it's all out now, and no damage done, but my dresses destroyed and the carpet spoiled. Thank the Lord, if that's the worst! But it *ain't* the worst. Dora, come along, this minute, to my room. I don't care if it is cold, and wet, and full of smoke. Don't you see—don't you see I'm in my night-clothes? I never thought of it before. I'm ruined, ruined completely! Go to bed, gentlemen; get out of the way as quick as you can. Dora, shut the door. Hand me that candle; I want to look at myself in the glass. To think that all those gentlemen should have seen me in this fix! I'd rather have perished in the flames. It's the very first night I've worn these flannel night-caps, and to be seen in 'em! Good gracious! how old I do look! Not a spear of hair on my head, scarcely, and this red night-gown and old petticoat on, and my teeth in the tumbler, and the paint all washed off my face, and scared besides! It's no use! I never—never can again make any of *those* men believe I'm only twenty-five; and I felt so sure of some of them.

Oh, Dora Adams, *you* needn't look pale; *you've* lost nothing. I'll warrant Mr. Little thought you never looked so pretty as in that ruffled gown, and your hair all down over your shoulders. He says you were fainting from the smoke when he dragged you out. You must be a little fool to be afraid to come out looking *that* way. They say that new boarder is a drawing-master, and I seen some of his pictures yesterday; he had some such ridiculous things. He'll caricature me for the amusement of the young men, I know. Only think how my portrait would look taken to-night! and he'll have it, I'm sure, for I noticed him looking at me, the first that reminded me of my situation, after the fire was put out. Well, there's but one thing to be done, and that's to put a bold face on it. I can't sleep any more to-night; besides, the bed's wet, and it's beginning to get daylight. I'll go to work and get myself ready for breakfast, and I'll pretend to something—I don't know just what—to get myself out of this scrape, if I can.

Good-morning, gentlemen, good-morning! We had quite a fright, last night, didn't we? Dora and I came pretty near paying dear for a little frolic. You see, we were dressing up in character, to amuse ourselves, and I was all fixed up for to represent an old woman, and had put on a gray wig and an old flannel gown that I found, and we'd set up pretty late, hav-

ing some fun all to ourselves; and I expect Dora must have been pretty sleepy when she was putting some of the things away, and set fire to a dress in the closet without noticing it. I've lost my whole wardrobe, nigh about, by her carelessness; but it's such a mercy we wasn't burned in our bed, that I don't feel to complain so much on that account. Isn't it curious how I got caught, dressed up like my grandmother? We didn't suppose we were going to appear before so large an audience, when we planned out our little frolic. What character did Dora assume? Really, Mr. Little, I was so scared, last night, that I disremember. She took off *her* rigging before she went to bed. Don't you think I'd personify a pretty good old woman, gentlemen—ha! ha!—for a lady of my age? What's that, Mr. Little? You wish I'd make you a present of that night-cap, to remember me by? Of course, I've no further use for it? Of course I haven't. It's one of Bridget's, that I borrowed for the occasion, and I've got to give it back to her. Have some more coffee, Mr. Greyson—do! I've got cream for it, this morning. Mr. Smith, help yourself to some of the beef-steak. It's a very cold morning—fine weather out of doors. Eat all you can, all of you. Have you any profiles to take, yet, Mr. Gamboge? I *may* make up my mind to set for mine before you leave us; I've always thought I should have it taken some time. In character? He! he! Mr. Little, you're so funny! But you'll excuse *me*, this morning, as I had such a fright last night. I must go and take up that wet carpet.

(To be continued.)

MY SISTERS AND I.

A FAMILY SKETCH.

BY KATE BERRY POTTER.

CHAPTER I.

So, you wish to hear my story, do you? What made you think, madam, that I had any story to tell? Because you had heard that one sister had a disappointment and died of a broken heart, and the other made a very romantic match? Well, I suppose it *was* romantic for her to marry a man that had been—no matter, I will not mention it here. But, indeed, she was not at all romantic; she did everything as a matter of course. A grand woman is that sister Minerva of mine. I warn you not to expect a sickly romance, for there was too much strong principle and earnest love in Minerva's case, too much actual haggard wretchedness in Araminta's, to furnish food for weak sentimentalism. But to begin.

You would not think, from my present state in life, that I was reared in poverty. Such was the fact, but it was honest poverty. My father was a Connecticut man, a farmer's son, and he married a farmer's daughter. He was as honest and good-natured as the day is long—I mean a midsummer day—but he was not fond of hard work, and took no fancy to farming. In boyhood, he conceived a liking for a shoemaker of his native place, a light-hearted man, full of fun and stories, and, from hanging about his shop, made up his mind to be himself a shoemaker. My grandfather did not approve of this, but he never opposed it, and, dying before his son became of age, leaving a mortgaged estate, which was sold to pay his debts, young Benjamin stuck to his last. Very much such a man he proved to be as his easy master; he had no faculty for getting rich. At twenty-five, he married Hannah Buel, who thus became Hannah Perkins, and set up housekeeping, taking his old mother from an uncle's, where she was considered burdensome, to share the scanty comforts of his own fireside. When his mother died, after blessing her dutiful son, my parents began to think of emigrating.

This was near the beginning of the present century, when people in New England were

talking much of the western country, and the favorable prospects for getting a living there. My father's ambition did not travel beyond New York State, in the central part of which, then a real Eldorado to eastern people, he concluded to pitch his tent. My good parents set out in the spring, their only family one infant, the little Benjamin, who, to their ceaseless grief, died soon after they reached their new home. They travelled in a long wagon covered with white tow cloth, which held all their worldly goods, and enough provisions, mostly cooked, to last during their journey. They slept at country inns, where my mother took supplies from the wagon and "warmed up" for their supper and breakfast. I have often heard her tell about their box of baked pork and beans, and have myself seen the box—a round wooden one, with a broad handle—which held this substantial fare. It was a very comfortable way of journeying; I am sure we need not laugh about their homely ways. People suffer a great deal more now, going the overland route to California. I will warrant they would be glad of my father's box of beans, or my mother's long, twisted doughnuts.

My father, who had an eye for beauty, and, by the way, was fond of reading, selected as his home a pretty village near the banks of the Mohawk River. It had been settled about fifteen years, and was already a thriving place. A number of wealthy families from the East lived there, and had built themselves handsome houses—wide, square, two-storied white houses, set off by gravel-walks and flourishing elm-trees. The county courts were held there twice each year, and at least three lawyers, who have since been distinguished in public life, were settled with their families in the village of Sadaquada, so called from the Indian name of a creek whose waters kept in motion the only grist-mill of the neighborhood. Here my father hired of Deacon Ainsworth a small brown house, one room of which was used for his shop, and went quietly at work in his vocation.

And here in Sadaquada three daughters were born to him. Minerva came first. My mother had a fondness for long, softly-flowing names. I believe she had read a few novels; but she was a good woman, and as thrifty as possible. Indeed, I am convinced that to her wise management we owed much of our home comfort. She was not strong-minded, but she was strong-hearted, loving her family with great tenderness. A year and a half after Minerva, came Araminta, between whom and myself intervened six years. I was baptized by the name of Belinda; so our names all ended in "a," to which my parents always gave the sound of "y." I think I must have been the "odd one" of the family; people say there is such a one in every household. I was a scrawny, puny child, petted and nursed by my mother and sisters, but never attracting the notice of any one out of the family. As we grew old enough, we all went to the village Academy. Father had a sort of pride that forbade his sending us to the "district school," though he could ill afford paying for our tuition at the Academy. I was fond of study and reading, and, being delicate, my mother never set me at doing any but the lightest household tasks. My sisters, on the contrary, were strong and healthy. They sewed, swept, scoured, baked, and cooked with my mother at home, all working harmoniously together. More than this, they grew up to be very beautiful girls. The eldest well became her name; she was tall, and had a queenly air, her hair and eyes were black, her form and gait perfect. Araminta was of the usual height, and exceedingly fair—a blonde beauty, with abundant light ringlets.

The young men all admired my sisters. Besides the Academy boys, there were a good many law-students in the village; Judge Baine had no less than six in his office. Though my sisters were nothing but a shoemaker's daughters, my father's upright life and their own native-born ladyhood made them respected. Society in Sadaquada could not have been entirely exclusive, for I remember that my sisters sometimes went to parties at the houses of the "best" people. They never had rich dresses, of course, but they always looked well. For summer they had each a plain white cambric, which was washed and altered when necessary, and lasted for years. Araminta used sometimes to wish for something nicer, but Minerva would say, "Handsome is as handsome does," and, in a pleasant, but decided way, succeeded in making her sister contented.

I remember once, when coming out of church, I overheard two gentlemen talking near me.

"By George," said one, "those Perkins girls are fine-looking; they appear better in their calicoes than the Miss M.'s in their stiff silks."

"That's a fact," said the other, following Minerva with a steady gaze as she walked on in her own unconscious manner.

The last speaker was Horace Sheldon, who had called at our house a few times. He soon became a frequent visitor. It was an humble place where we received our friends. In winter, the kitchen, rag-carpeted, with its bureau, and looking-glass, and corner cupboard, all clean and comfortable, served as dining and sitting-room—for we could afford but one fire besides that in the shop. In the summer, we opened our little front room, which was furnished with more pretension. It had a striped, homespun carpet, of gay colors, and a little table bearing our large family Bible and a few other books, white dimity curtains with a fringe of small cotton balls which mother had brought from Connecticut, and a few old-fashioned chairs. Come to my room, some day, and you shall see those curtains at my windows, and the cherry table with the big Bible on it.

But I must go on with my story, or you will not wait to hear it out. Horace Sheldon was a law student, a very handsome young man, with pleasant manners, and was a general favorite among the ladies. He was an orphan, and dependent on his own exertions and talents. He had a tight-fisted uncle, a farmer who lived in the country, a few miles from Sadaquada, who, he used to tell my sisters, he hoped would aid him in setting up in his profession. My mother was quite flattered by his visits. But one morning, after he had spent the previous evening at our house, and had sat late with Minerva in the front room, my father said to her:—

"I think young Sheldon comes here too much, Minervy. I don't want these fellows trifling with my girls. We're poor, but we came of good stock, and there has never been a taint on my name or your mother's as far back as we know."

Minerva turned upon him composedly, yet with respect, and answered, blushing: "Father, we are engaged. I like him very much. Have you any serious objections?"

My father looked surprised, but, after a moment, said: "No, Minervy, if his character is good, and he can support you."

Minerva smiled. "He is poor now, father, and so am I; but in about a year he thinks he

can marry. He will be admitted then. And as to his character, father, you know everybody here says he is almost the only young man that don't drink and play cards."

My father was satisfied. Young folks in those days did not require five thousand a year on which to begin life. Nothing more was said on the subject. Sheldon continued his visits for about three months, when, one evening, on calling to see Minerva, he told her he was going to his uncle's, and should be absent a week or two. A fortnight had nearly passed. It was on a stormy, November night that our father came in from the post-office with a look of trouble and amazement upon his honest, pleasant face. We were all sitting by the kitchen fire in that small, rag-carpeted room where we kept ourselves warm in winter weather—the girls sewing steadily, and myself reading a story-book that a neighbor's child had lent me. My father shook the light snow from his old camlet cloak and stood on the hearth looking doubtfully at Minerva. Two or three times he tried to speak; at last bolting out with words like these: "Minervy, Sheldon's brought to our jail to-day; arrested on a charge of passing counterfeit money."

My poor sister threw down her work and rose from her chair. She caught hold of father's shoulder, and said, in a low voice: "Is that all true?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so," he answered.

Minerva was nineteen years old then; when she turned round towards me, she looked to be forty. She sat down and covered her face for a few minutes, then rose and went up stairs to her little bed-room. When she had gone, father told us what he had heard of this wretched affair. Sheldon had called upon his uncle for money, had been repulsed unfeelingly; temptation assailed him in the shape of some spurious bank-notes, with which, in an evil hour, he had sought to discharge several small debts. "The proof is dreadful strong," said my father. "He is to be examined before the Justice, to-morrow, and I expect nothing but what he will be committed for trial."

While he was speaking, Minerva came in, having on her long green plaid mantle, such as were worn in those days, and her head covered by her black silk hood trimmed round the front by a strip of chinchilla fur.

"Where are you going?" we all asked, in a breath.

"Up to the jail," was her answer, and she shut her lips tightly to keep them from quivering.

"You can't see him," said my mother, compassionately.

"Mrs. Green will never refuse me, I am sure," said Minerva.

Mrs. Green was the jailor's wife. She and her husband were proverbial for their kind hearts.

"I will go with you," said my father, who had just started for his shop. "It's very dark and blustering, and I'll carry the lantern. Belindy, run and fetch me a bit of candle."

So I ran and got the bit of tallow candle, and stuck it in the socket of the tin lantern—that pretty tin lantern, pierced full of holes arranged in diamonds, stars, and other shapes, that I admired so much, and used to wish I could have for my playhouse, but that father would never let me take, for fear I should break the glass lid.

I had been in bed, sound asleep, for an hour or more, when I was waked by Minerva's entrance. She took off her cloak, and knelt by the little round stand at the bed's head for a long time, as it seemed to me, then lay down at my side, and quietly moaned herself to sleep, holding my hand, as she was wont to do, in hers.

Sheldon was fully committed to stand his trial at the next term of the court, which would not be till March. That was a gloomy winter for us. Minerva went once a week to the jail. She was not often admitted to his cell, but would hold a brief interview through the diamond-shaped hole in the door. Sometimes I went with her, and remained a little way apart, while they talked together. Sheldon had a wild, haggard look that haunts my memory to this day. When the trial came on, I well remember what a period of suspense were those three days which it occupied. Many of the village ladies went to the court-room. Minerva staid closely at home. At times, she would busy herself about household matters, then she would take her needle, soon to drop it, and walk the house restlessly and in silence. On the evening of the third day, my father came in from the court-room. We all knew that the jury had been for several hours deliberating on their verdict.

"What is it?" said my mother.

Father turned away his face from us all, as he answered: "GUILTY! State's prison for ten years."

We heard a low wail and a sudden fall. Minerva lay senseless on the floor. It was her last sign of weakness.

He was carried to prison next day, when we

all went early in the morning to say "Good-by." The young criminal had been ably defended, but the proofs against him were overwhelming; and Judge Baine, who did not wish to be accused of unduly favoring one of his own students, had put the case rather strongly to the jury. Our interview was soon over, but I remember quite distinctly some things that were said.

"Ten years! it is a long time, and a convicted felon to keep faith with, Minerva," murmured Sheldon, who sat bowed down, with his face in his hands.

"I shall wait for you, Horace," were Minerva's words, and she put her arm tenderly round his neck.

When we came out, Minerva walked home with the air of a queen. "I shall save him yet, for a virtuous life," she said to my mother. Quite unconsciously, she was acting a romance. Since then, I have read Moore's songs, and I never think of that time without recalling the verses where these lines occur:—

"I know not, I ask not if guilt's in that heart;
I but know that I love thee, whatever thou art."

CHAPTER II.

DURING the winter just passed, we had had few visitors. A neighbor dropped in occasionally, sometimes to sympathize, and oftener out of curiosity. One young man had called frequently, and appeared to admire Araminta. His father kept the village inn, was an easy, careless soul, who let his son grow up without restraint, yet with plenty of spending money. Bill Dakin had already formed habits of drinking, and was idle. He would be called a "fast young man" now; then everybody thought him "wild," but not a great deal worse than his associates. My father did not like him. Araminta was father's pet; his eldest loved a felon, and he would not harbor the idea of encouraging his favorite in receiving the attentions of a man who seemed to him on the road to ruin. Minerva, too, openly disapproved Bill Dakin's visits; so, as Araminta was yielding, Bill was given to understand that his presence was not welcome. In the spring he went West, and we heard no more of him for several years. I think now that Araminta was not much interested in Bill Dakin; he had not succeeded in rousing any warm feeling in her breast.

After Horace Sheldon went to prison, Minerva began working very diligently at the business of dressmaking. She had long, with Araminta's

help, made the dresses for the family, and had a great deal of taste. Very little of her earnings did she expend for herself; all that was not needed for the household was carefully put aside. She said nothing, but we knew that she was working for Horace, that she might have a little fund to begin life with him on leaving the prison. We all had a vague hope that his term of confinement would be shortened; and, indeed, at the end of two years a rumor reached us, uncertain at first, but it was soon confirmed. Friends of Sheldon had interested themselves, and there was a prospect of their succeeding in obtaining a pardon from the Governor. Sheldon had behaved so well since he entered the prison, was so quiet, and worked so steadily at the trade assigned him, as to make a most favorable impression on the officers of the prison and all who had an opportunity to learn anything of his conduct. Minerva plied her needle with nervous haste now. She often brought her work home, to sew, undisturbed, in her own chamber.

One evening about eight o'clock—it was in the month of May, warm and rainy—we heard the tramp of a horse nearing our gate. It stopped there, and, in a moment, the door was thrown open and Horace Sheldon rushed in. He was booted and spurred, his boots covered with mud, and his whole attire travel-soiled. He had been discharged with a full pardon; friends had met him at the town of U—, ten miles distant, which he had reached that evening. There was no railroad then. Not wishing to be recognized in Sadaquada, he had been furnished with a horse, and had come on alone. I was almost a child, and though I remember many things very distinctly that took place earlier, yet the events of that bewildering evening seem like a dream in the past. I know that Horace and Minerva went by themselves into the front room and talked a few minutes. When they came back into the family-room, Minerva walked right up to father, and said: "Horace wants to marry me to-night. Will you go and ask Mr. Holmes to come up here?"

"Yes," said my father, putting on his hat quietly and going out. In about twenty minutes, he returned with Mr. Holmes, our pastor and steadfast friend. Meantime, Minerva had gone up stairs, slipped off her dark blue calico frock, and put on a white cambric. I wish I could see a picture of her, just as she looked then. We should laugh at it, I know, but at that time her attire was faultless. Her black hair was combed straight off her face, and hung

behind each ear in two long curls. At the back of her head was a high-topped comb, such as were worn then, which held her abundant tresses in a heavy coil. Her dress—I should like to be able to tell you how it was made. Look here, at this picture of the Empress Josephine. It was just such a short waist as that, with funny puffed sleeves, and the skirt scarcely wider round her ankles than at her hips; for hoops had gone out long before that period, not to come in again till after thirty years. There were no gas-lights, no supper-table, no display of rich gifts at that bridal, such as you and I saw not long ago, when Minerva's oldest daughter was married.

Good Mr. Holmes, I shall never forget him; he is dead now; he was a stern-looking man, a great scholar, but thoroughly good. I used to be afraid of him when I was little, and thought he lived always in that high, queer pulpit with the sounding-board over his head, where I saw him of Sundays, when I fidgeted beside my mother, and kept myself awake by drawing pictures with a pin on the seat. Well, he married them, and said something afterwards in his slow, solemn voice that I cannot remember now; but we all cried—Horace and Minerva more than the others. After Mr. Holmes had gone, father went out and borrowed a horse and chaise of our neighbor, Deacon Ainsworth. I should like to have you see that old chaise. I saw it myself only three months ago, when I went to Sadaquada on a visit, "turned out to grass" in the deacon's old barn. It had outlived its first owner—he is dead and gone these twenty years. Such a pokerish thing, I wonder anybody could drive in it without pitching over the dashboard, it was so high and toppling. Such was the carriage in which Minerva set out on her bridal-tour—not very much like the neat, dark green affair with drab linings which she has for her own now. The long old clock in the kitchen corner struck eleven as Minerva and father mounted the chaise, while Horace leaped on his horse and set off before them. Not much baggage did Minerva have, our dear, strong-hearted, patient one, when she left her father's house and went out to follow Horace Sheldon's fortunes. Only a little covered basket in her hand, and a small brass-nailed trunk.

The next morning, very early, father came back alone. "I saw them off in the stage for Albany at five o'clock," I heard him say to my mother. After that ours was rather a sad house for a while. Minerva's conduct was regarded in various lights by the village folk. Some of them thought she had done very foolishly and

would repent it; others commended her constancy and faith, and declared that she would be rewarded by his future good behavior. I heard Squire Grant, a purse-proud man, say to another, in passing our house one day: "A pretty piece of business this for that Perkins girl, that my daughters were trying to make something of by encouraging her in the dress-making line, to marry that good-for-nothing prison-bird. They deserve to be sent to the poor-house." Squire Grant did not dream then that one of those same daughters of his would desert her husband and end a life of shame by a pauper's death in New York, where Horace Sheldon's wife would save her from a pauper's grave by paying the expenses of her burial. Such a thing did happen, as you know.

As for Minerva, she justified her marriage by her own words to us before she stepped into the old chaise—"Horace says he needs me to encourage and help him at this particular time. He has come first to me, and I will not fail him."

They went to New York, where friends helped Horace to a situation in a mercantile house, with a fair salary. Minerva carried her frugal ways to the city, and they began housekeeping on a small scale. Before the end of a year, we had received substantial tokens of kind feeling from Horace. He wished me to become a teacher, and sent my father means to pay for my schooling. Nice presents of clothing came to us all. The autumn after Minerva's marriage, various reasons moved my father to leave Sadaquada. There were unpleasant associations for us all; we sometimes heard unkind remarks; and father thought he might do better, as he was not as strong as he used to be, to give up his own shop and take work from some large establishment. So we removed to U—, ten miles distant, a newly-incorporated city, and a very flourishing inland town. Here, too, I could attend an excellent school, with a prospect of becoming an assistant teacher in a short time. We hired a small house in a back street, and lived in comfort. You would think we might have been very happy there; but U— is associated with some of my saddest experiences, and I never think of the time when we lived there without a shudder.

CHAPTER III.

ARMINA'S beauty must have attracted attention in the town of U—. We went to public worship regularly at the since famous

Dr. B——'s church, where I used to see the young men staring at my sister. One evening, a few weeks before New Year's Day, two gentlemen surprised us by calling. We received them in our little back sitting-room, where mother was knitting, and Araminta sewing, and myself studying. Father had not yet come in from his evening's work. My mother was flattered by the visit; Araminta, always, rather shy, was pleased, though embarrassed. They were dashing-looking young men—one a Mr. Harrison, a merchant, at whose store Araminta had made a few purchases. He introduced his friend Mr. Truman—what a misnomer!—and both were very polite to my mother; and when my father came in, Mr. Truman took great pains to talk with him. I was never anywhere ashamed of my father, though conscious that my education in some things was better than his, for he knew a good deal of books, and was an unpretending man. Before they left, the gentlemen invited my sister to a New Year's ball to be held at M——'s hotel, then in the first glow of its great reputation as the best house west of Albany. Mr. Truman handed her a ball-ticket, and our new acquaintances soon took their leave. Araminta unfolded her ticket, which was a small sheet of note-paper, with a spread eagle and other devices at top, and underneath a printed invitation on this wise: "The company of Miss Araminta Perkins is requested at M——'s hotel, on the evening of January 1st, 182—." Her own name filled a blank in the types with a bold, dashing hand. Below were the names of the managers, embracing those of many of the first gentlemen in U——.

Araminta was gratified, and my mother looked at the ticket through her spectacles, with evident satisfaction; and my father, such was his pride in Araminta, seemed pleased to have her receive the notice of men whom he knew to be respectable. There were two weeks in which to prepare. But what was there to prepare? Nothing; Araminta neither had a suitable dress nor the means to buy one. The next evening, there came a large package directed to my sister. She opened it, and a beautiful piece of blue gauzy stuff—zephyr, I think it used to be called, for that was before tissues and de laines were heard of—was unfolded. There was also a dress-pattern of plain dark brown silk, with everything needful for making them both up. No wonder the simple-hearted girl was pleased; she had never in her life owned such handsome dresses. I think now that the wisdom and discretion of our house were gone when Minerva left it; she

had checked Araminta's love of dress and admiration, and had, with her own strong-will, but gentle hand, guided and advised her. If she had been with us then, she would have said, "Don't make those dresses; keep them till you find who sent them, and then return the presents." Araminta, left to herself, went adrift. The dresses were made up, and she wore the blue one to the New Year's ball. How beautiful she looked in a dress whose hue became her fair complexion so well! She wore a kind of coronet of silver spangles—they were fashionable then—on her head; it had accompanied the dress. Mr. Truman came in his own sleigh, and escorted her to the ball. It soon became apparent that he was the donor of the dresses. He called often after the ball, which was only the beginning of a round of sleigh-rides and dances to which he accompanied her. His first gifts, too, were followed up by others—gloves, scarfs, satin slippers, waist-ribbons, and a beautiful fan glittering with spangles.

"I guess Tom Truman takes a fancy to your sister," said a schoolmate to me, as we walked home from the Seminary, one day, together. "But the town-talk, before your folks came here, was, that he wanted Miss Sarah Singleton, and that she didn't object; only she felt rather above him because his father is a livery-stable-keeper; but he's got rich at doing the business, and Tom is getting rich too, and so I shouldn't wonder if she made up her mind to have him after all."

Now, Sarah Singleton belonged to the very highest *ton* of U——, her father a bank-president, her brother a naval officer, and she was herself a very proud, fashionable girl. It was quite improbable that there was any truth in what my gossiping schoolmate had told me. I said nothing about it at home, where my books were my chief occupation, and where I talked but little. Two months later, somewhere in April, I think, when Araminta had seen nothing of Mr. Truman since the last cotillon-party of the season, and had appeared in low spirits from that time, our household was startled by the report that Tom Truman, the livery-stable-keeper's son, had married Miss Singleton that same April day. The story was true; my beautiful sister had served the base Tom Truman for a tool in effecting his purpose of making Miss Singleton jealous to such a degree that she had recalled her wandering admirer. He had not scrupled to engage Araminta's affections, and had managed it cunningly, too, devoting himself to her in public, and yet never making love in private. And it was only at

promiscuous balls and parties that he had introduced our duped sister, for in U—— we could not expect to be received as guests at private parties. He had presented her to none of the ladies, and had taken special care to avoid Miss Singleton. These things Araminta told my mother and me now, unconsciously revealing the infatuation that had led her on, and even yet unable to understand the depth of his wicked plan. My blood boils when I think of him. Truman's father was wealthy, and, though a plebeian, had advantages that perhaps were not to be slighted by Miss Singleton's family, who were rather impoverished by some recent financial difficulties of the bank. At any rate, Truman calculated rightly in attempting to create the impression that he had left her, and Araminta's superior charms completed the success of his scheme. That man has prospered to this day. He lives in a grand house, his wife is a stately lady, and his grandchildren sit on his lap. I sometimes wonder if he has ever repented; and when I think of the doom pronounced on those who do not repent, I am sure vengeance will overtake him at some time or other, and at some place or other.

It was at this turn of affairs that Araminta's evil genius, in the shape of Bill Dakin, appeared on the scene. He was handsomely dressed, sported a gold watch, told us he had a good situation in a forwarding-house at Buffalo, and was doing well. He renewed his suit to Araminta, assuring her that she only could make a steady man of him, and that, if she should refuse him, he might fall again into dissipated habits, and that, in fine, his fate was in her hands. Araminta listened, and was won. Her recent despair and mortification made her the more ready to embrace a prospect of happiness and of removal from the neighborhood of Truman's residence and the scene of his treachery. She believed that Bill Dakin had a good temper and the ability to support her in comfort, and that his attachment to herself would insure his future steadiness. Alas for the woman that thinks she can herself, instead of God's grace, keep a man in the right path. Araminta married Bill Dakin, and went to Buffalo with him the next July. Thence she wrote us that they had taken board at a fine hotel, and were "delightfully settled;" but after a few months we heard from her very seldom. The following spring she wrote us that they had hired a dwelling and were keeping house; and in June came tidings of the birth of a son. "I have named him for father," she wrote, "and hope he will grow up as good a man."

Deacon Ainsworth went to Buffalo that season on business, and came over to U—— to see us on his return. He gave a sad account of Bill Dakin, confirming all our suspicions. "He's neglected his business so much," said our old neighbor, "that they turned him away from the forwarding store. In the first place, they boarded at a dreadful expensive hotel, and Bill took to drinking very soon. He's a hand on a lake boat now; and it's a poor, shakly old tenement where they live. Araminta looks feeble, and the baby is a puny thing. You see I called on her. She didn't complain, but I could see for myself. She sent her love to you all, and said she would try to come and visit you in the fall."

No sooner had the deacon gone, than I wrote to my poor sister, telling her to come home and stay with us. In her answer, she declined doing so at present, and, with womanlike attempts at concealment of her troubles, said: "William is at work, and earns something for us, and I couldn't leave him alone now; he would miss the baby very much." But in two years after her marriage, Araminta did come back to us, the worn and faded image of her former self, and with a forlorn, half-clothed baby. Bill had died from the effects of a drunken fit and a deck fight. She had seen him buried with what scanty funds she could raise from the sale of a few household articles, and, with the help of some neighbors almost as poor as herself, had taken passage on a canal boat and come home. She made but slight revelations of the trials and miseries which she had suffered; it was not necessary; our own hearts and imaginations filled up the outline of her sad story.

My parents now began to show the marks of age. My mother's fingers moved less nimbly with her knitting-needles, and I was oftener called to share her household labor. My father worked less diligently, and the sorrows of his favorite Araminta affected his body and mind alike. But we lacked no comforts of living; for I was an assistant teacher in the primary department of the Seminary, and Minerva's aid to her utmost means was given us. We had not seen her since that rainy May night, more than three years before, when she left us to share Horace Sheldon's fortunes. Of him we heard an excellent report. He was in business for himself, and had gained a reputation as an honorable, upright man; and, moreover, Minerva had written us that, distrusting his own strength, he had determined to seek higher help, and had assumed the obligations of a

Christian life. After Araminta's return, in reply to my brief detail to Minerva of our unhappy sister's misfortunes, she wrote us to this effect:—

"Next spring, Horace is going into a larger house, and then we want you all to come and live with us. There is a room on purpose for father and mother. I wish my little girl to know her grandparents. Children grow up better for having old people about them. Belinda can have a nice little school close by; and Araminta must not be afraid of being in the way. She can help me with the family sewing, and Benny can share the nursery with little Hannah."

When I read him the letter, tears came into father's eyes; but he shook his head, and said: "It is too much for Horace to do, and I should feel out of place in that city; besides, I don't expect to stay anywhere in this world a great while."

His foreboding was true. He had a paralytic stroke, and died, very peacefully, the next March. Good Minerva braved the inconveniences of travel at that season, and came to us a week before he breathed his last. I cannot dwell on the sad scenes of that time. He wished to be buried beside his first-born; so we sent over to Sadaquada for Deacon Ainsworth to advise and help us. He came with officious but well-meant kindness, and, after the funeral, told us the little house was empty where we used to live, and that we had many good friends in Sadaquada who would be glad to have us return there. The deacon was a widower then, having just lost his second wife, and, when he spoke, he looked askance at Araminta, faded and ill, but still beautiful. But Minerva arranged matters better. She paid the funeral expenses, negotiated for the sale of such household furniture as we wished to part with, and made preparations to receive us at her new home in May. It was decided, however, as our mother seemed to wish it, that we should leave U—, and spend the intervening time at Sadaquada; therefore we shook the dust from our feet, and left the city in a week after my father's funeral, taking up once more our temporary abode in the little house where my sisters and I were born.

It was Araminta's last journey before she crossed the dark river. She had wept but little when father died. "I shall follow him soon," were her words. With a hectic flush on her cheek and a hollow cough, she took to her bed on our arrival at Sadaquada, and, when came the week fixed for our departure, she could

not sit up. She had lost all interest in life; her mind was not strong enough to endure the shock of her early disappointment and subsequent wretched marriage, and her child's welfare gave her no anxiety. "I leave Benny in good hands," said she.

We laid Araminta beside my father when the apple-trees were white and pink with flowers. I remember that I made a wreath of the blossoms from an old tree which grew near our kitchen window, and put it in the coffin, round her thin face, whence all the beauty but those soft, light curls that rested on her sunken cheeks had departed. Minerva could not come to us then—she had a new-born infant; but she sent us money, and the neighbors were very kind. Deacon Ainsworth and Mr. Holmes in particular helped us in a great many ways. Their families assisted us in packing, and, when mother and myself, with little Benny, had left the old house, they kept us among them till the last of June before they would let us go. Indeed, Deacon Ainsworth gave me to understand that I might always have a home with him; but I did not take the hint. I was too young to be a "ma" for his three big boys, and the Deacon was a little too old for me, when he was turned of fifty, and myself not eighteen.

It is nearly thirty years ago since we three took that journey. It was my first experience in travelling, if one might call such a trip travelling. We came on a canal-boat to Albany, thence on a steamboat to New York. My story is already so long that I will not weary you by an account of my impressions; nor, though everything was new to me, have I a vivid recollection of it all. It seems dreamlike in my memory now; yet one thing remains there fresh and green—the hearty welcome we had from Horace and Minerva. Among her surviving children and her multiplying grandchildren my mother lived ten years. We buried her at Sadaquada, where I have since visited the graves of my family.

As for me, Benny has always been my especial care. He calls me "mother," and is a credit to an old maid's training. He is married now, lives in the next block, and has two little boys of his own. After my mother was gone, I missed her very much; I never had a nearer tie. But Horace, the once convicted counterfeiter, "the prison-bird," has never been anything to me except goodness. His is not a Sunday religion; he acts it out during the week in good deeds; while my sister Minerva, by exercising kindness year after year, grows better and better. Their increasing wealth

does not take away from the majestic simplicity of her character. She teaches her children, of whom she has six, that an upright life is worth more than money. Horace, I must acknowledge, has one weak point; but who can wonder? We are sometimes visited by old acquaintances and friends from Sadaquada and the neighborhood. He is rather nervous lest they should betray the guilty secret of his youth. None ever have—to their honor I speak it. He says to Minerva: "A man is none the better for blazoning his former evil deeds, and making a merit of confession." But, occasionally, in private, Horace, who is not a great talker, will speak of old times, and remark: "Had you, Minerva, and your father's family spurned me then, I do not know what shameful end would have been mine. Don't talk, Belinda, of your obligations to me. To your honored father, poor man though he was, and to your good sister here, who stuck to me so closely, I owe everything."

I am useful and happy here—useful, I flatter myself, in a thousand ways to them all. My hair is gray, though Minerva, so much older than I, shows no frost on hers yet; but my heart is young. I never was a sentimentalist, and never, in the darkest hour of poverty or grief, said to myself, "Is it always to be so, Belinda Perkins? Are you doomed to struggle on alone, with no arm to protect you, and no

love to be yours exclusively?" I never had time for such useless thoughts, and have, moreover, observed that women protect the men quite as much as the men protect the women. My father could not have lived without my mother; she survived him ten years. And just think, there was my sister Araminta, deceived by one of the men, and really murdered by another; and Horace, although he raised Minerva from poverty to her present independence, could not have gained a fortune without her help, and is as much, if not rather more, given to relying upon her advice and wisdom than she upon his.

But see! the fire in the grate burns dimly; they will soon be home from the concert, and we are both sleepy. I shall never greet my fortieth birthday, for it is past, and I like my quiet position in the household—no cares, no fuss, loved and consulted by all; still, if that good-looking widower of fifty, who lives opposite, and who calls sometimes, and talks rather foolishly about his lonely state, and his girls getting married and leaving him, should take to discoursing sensibly and in a straightforward way, really I cannot say but that I might be tempted, notwithstanding Deacon Ainsworth once told me, when he was looking for a fourth wife, that "marryin' is a plaguy resky business," to do something very absurd. So, now, good-night.

JACASSA'S JOURNAL.

BY MARY W. JANVRIN, AUTHOR OF "PEACE," "THE COUNTRY COUSIN," "MISS SABRINA'S DREAM," ETC. ETC.

(Concluded from page 53.)

JULY 25th, 10 o'clock P. M.

" 'Lisha has come !"

Mrs. Hull came into my chamber this morning, her face aglow with pleasure. If I had been writing a story, and desired to describe her broad, beaming, motherly face as the personification of pleased surprise, I could have filled a paragraph with such description. But I was not thus engaged; instead, I was roused by her voice from the doze into which I had fallen in the cool cane rocker I had drawn up at the window—where the hot sunbeams were tempered among the flickering shadows of the great elm branches—to sit and think, or enjoy a dip into the pages of Mrs. Browning, so I only replied—

"Has? And how pleased you look, my dear Mrs. Hull!"

"And I *am* pleased—jest as pleased as I can be!" she replied, sitting down a moment near the window, and wiping her perspiring forehead. "And to think that he should 'a up and come home without sendin' a letter, so 't I could 'a got fixed up for him! It's jest his way, though. 'Don't want any fixin's on *my* account, aunty,' he always says. And the beater was, I never heard the stage stop, nor nothin'. You see, Miss Jacassy, I was in the back buttery, whippin' up eggs for my custards, and what should I hear but a man's step on the sittin'-room floor and along through the kitchen, till I looked up and see 'Lisha standin' in the buttery door, and he a-laughin', and sayin' 'Good-mornin', Aunt Sarah!' and a-takin' the egg-dish right out of my hand to kiss me! I thought I should 'a fainted! I sot right down and cried, it come so sudden-like. But tears didn't last long." And her beaming countenance verified her assertion. "I jest made him go right up into his room—I allers call the west chamber 'Lisha's room'—to get

the dust off; and I come in to see if, bimeby, you wouldn't come down stairs to talk with him till father comes, while I get dinner on the table. 'Lisha'll enjoy your company, and your books and po'try; and I'm glad he's come, for 'twon't be so lonely for you now. You'll come down, jest to oblige me, won't you, Miss Jacassy?"

A sudden whim seized me. "Certainly," I answered; "but, 'just to oblige me,'" I added, detaining her, "don't tell Mr. Meredith anything about my being a *writer*. I have enough of *that* in the city; here, let me escape it. Now, promise me you won't speak of it, you nor your husband either, dear Mrs. Hull."

She laughed at my earnestness. "La, child, as if you need to go to bein' ashamed of any of them beautiful stories you make up! But sartinly, I'll do any way to please you. You'll come right down! But, dear sakes, them custards won't get made, if I stand a-loiterin'!"

In passing out, Mrs. Hull left my chamber door slightly ajar; and presently, while from the parlor below came the sound of unclosing shutters and raised windows, I heard the opening of the "west chamber" door across the staircase entry from mine, the sound of slipped feet through the entry and down the stairs, then a manly, pleasant-toned voice saying, "Aunt Sarah, why will you insist upon making a stranger of me, and putting me into that close parlor?" Then, from the sitting-room, the same voice said: "Aha! what have we here? Wild flowers, fancy work, and a straw hat! You surely have a lady visitor in the house, Aunt Sarah."

"Sh! A young lady boards here," I heard Mrs. Hull commence; then the closing of the door precluded my hearing further. But I smiled, for I knew the honest woman would keep her promise of not betraying me; and I

resolved to keep my embroidery, and the fruits of my morning rambles in the woods, henceforth in my own room.

Presently, "Miss Jacassy!" came from the foot of the staircase.

I was brushing my hair before the mirror. I took a few geranium-leaves from a vase and placed them in my braids, and, smoothing my muslin wrapper, went down.

"'Lisha, this is Miss Jacassy Bowen," was the very informal presentation to the tall man who lounged in the rocking-chair by the window.

He rose and advanced with outstretched hand and a well-bred air; but an amused smile hovered on his well-cut lips. "Aunt Sarah seems to have forgotten that her "'Lisha," to strangers, should be 'Mr. Meredith,' though I trust I may not be long regarded as a stranger by Miss Bowen, whom I am happy to find under the roof of my boyhood's home," he said, politely, and still smiling in a kind of frank way that set me at once at ease.

"La, that's jest like me!" laughed Aunt Sarah. "But no wonder if I talk crossways, for your sudden comin' has upset my head entirely, 'Lisha!" And, with a beaming face, she retreated to the kitchen.

"I do not know that I shall apologize for the 'easy negligence' of my attire, Miss Bowen," said Mr. Meredith, still smiling, and glancing down to his dressing-gown, "though, surely, if Aunt Sarah had told me I were to meet any one, and that a lady, I should have retained the professional suit of black."

"Pray, do not give yourself any uneasiness, Mr. Meredith," I replied, "for I, too, am a lover of ease and comfort, and trust that neither professional suits nor *airs* will be donned at Ryefield on my account. I dislike *professions* of all sorts, and *professionists*," I added, half sarcastically, half smilingly.

"You *do*?" he replied, in the same vein. "You are an anomaly, then, for young ladies usually constitute a large ingredient of the latter-named class, since they are constantly making violent professions of fancy, love, or friendship."

"I never make *either*," I retorted, glancing up to meet his half curious, half amused air.

"Ha! you throw down the glove to me?" he laughed. "I accept it; and if we two are to be located together under the same roof for the fortnight I purpose stopping in Ryefield—and my aunt tells me you are passing the summer here—I foresee that we shall either become friends or enemies. My own inclinations would favor the former relation; but perhaps a per-

verse young lady's taste may the latter. We shall see."

And so we fell into unrestrained, natural conversation. Had we met under other circumstances—he the dignified lawyer, and I the literary woman—this might not have been; or if, under such circumstances, I had said to him what I had just saucily uttered, I am sure he would have thought me "strong-minded" and anxious for "an argument," and so avoided me. As it was, by the time Amos Hull came from the hay-field to dinner, to welcome "'Lisha" with a hearty shake of his hard, sun-browned hand, and Aunt Sarah summoned us to the table set out in the long, cool kitchen, we were on excellent talking terms with each other.

At table, I sat, not opposite, but where I could have a good view of Mr. Meredith's side-face without seeming to observe him. He was not handsome—as ladies vote handsome men—for his features were too massive for the type of the Greek Antinous; but his hand was white, muscular, and shapely; there was a warmth and kindness about his dark gray eyes, a gentle firmness about the well-cut lips, and, altogether, a strength and repose about his whole manner which quite accorded with my idea of "a manly man." I never did like exquisites—beg pardon; I forget Montague Livingstone Wentworth, though that hardly disproves my assertion, since the "I" of *now* and the "I" of *then* are two different beings. I do not care if a man be not over-particular in matters of apparel; in fact, to my thinking, the very carelessness with which he arrays himself betokens a mind absorbed in something else than the fopperies of dress which we women associate with "nice young men;" and I was secretly pleased to notice that Mr. Meredith's neck-tie was slightly loose and awry—it was so warm, that sultry July noon.

"Waal, now, Miss Jacassy, this is goin' to be jest the afternoon to be down to the beach," said Mr. Hull. "There's hundreds of carriages gone by this forenoon, and I s'pose the big houses are crowded. She's the greatest gal ye ever see for the salt water, 'Lisha"—turning to Mr. Meredith. "Guess you'll have to take a ride down there with 'Cassy"—this was a way the farmer had of abbreviating my name.

"And so Miss Bowen loves the sea?" said Mr. Meredith, turning to me, quickly. "I am glad of that. She shall ride down with me this very afternoon, that is, provided she will not place an injunction on my wearing this unprofessional dressing-gown!" And his mischievous gaze encountered mine.

"Agreed!" I laughed; "but I would advise you to take along a blanket shawl, in case the cool ocean breezes should blow in from the east, or a sea-spray should rise, or a sudden thunder-shower put a damper on your ardor—all which accidents would be very pleasing, no doubt, to Mr. Meredith."

"Certainly! I love Dame Nature in all her moods, whether she scolds, weeps, smiles, or envelops herself in the foggy mantle of mystery, for each is but a phase of her life. She is very fleckle, quite like a woman!"

"Now fretting, now weeping, now smiling, now raising such a din about one's ears that heaven and earth hold no other similitude save the rattling thunder-peal," I laughed. "Flattering comparison that, Mr. Meredith, to us women."

"Yet I think the simile may be a true one," he returned. "There may be some of the latter sort, I doubt not, but—pardon the illustration," he added, courteously—"they are of that virago, strong-minded order whom we instinctively shun."

"Then you dislike 'strong-minded' women?" I asked, demurely.

"I must confess to 'the soft impeachment,'" he replied, laughingly. "From lecturers, female physicians, authoresses, and all of that ilk, Heaven forefend me!" And he drew back with a deprecating gesture. I was puzzled to account for the mischievous twinkle of his eye, but he added, quietly: "You will ride to the sea-shore with me this afternoon, Miss Bowen?"

"Now, that's too hard, 'Lisha!" began good Farmer Hull, breaking in upon my affirmative answer. "If I were 'Cassy here, I never'd write another word of po—"

"Potato, Amos?" quickly interrupted Mrs. Hull, touching his foot under the table, and growing very red in the face, for, in her hurry, she had quite forgotten to communicate my request to her husband. "These *are* nice—the largest new potatoes I've seen this year. Chenaagoes are the best for plantin', ain't they, Amos?"

I bit my lips, and glanced towards Mr. Meredith, but he seemed perfectly unconscious of the nature of the interruption; and presently, after Aunt Sarah's nice pudding, which he praised immoderately, and a dessert of tempting "black-heart" cherries, we left the table.

And, this evening, the sunset hour found Mr. Meredith and myself driving slowly along the wide, level beach. He guided his horse close to the edge of the breakers and into them to cool his fetlocks. How much I enjoyed it

all—the sunset sky, the deep-voiced sea, and Mr. Meredith's conversation, betraying such an acquaintance with books, men, manners, and life! When we rode slowly homeward, it was late, and the moon was rising out of the ocean, and the fresh sea-breeze made him glad to fold the blanket shawl over his shoulders, for Mr. Meredith had persisted in wearing the dressing-gown.

I am not weary or sleepy, and so I have seated myself, at this late hour, to write out this day's events in my journal. How well I know him, and yet this morning we had not met!

August 20th.

Nearly four weeks have passed since Mr. Meredith came here, and yet he has not spoken of his departure. I think this quiet and repose in the summer days at Ryefield suit him well—he seems to enjoy everything so much. His partner, he tells me, is at Nahant, with his family, for Mr. Harlow has an invalid wife and two fashionable young-lady daughters. I have heard of them in town as two dashing, accomplished girls and belles. They live in a handsome stone front in P— Square. Mr. Meredith seems to like to talk of them—the Misses Harlow—particularly of Kate, the elder, a handsome brunette, who has a great deal of attention in society. I am not jealous. Why should I be? He is nothing to me. I suppose they are engaged, he speaks of her so freely, and I hope they will be happy. I hope she is worthy of him, for I could not bear to hear that, when he marries, his domestic life is not everything it should be, he has such a deep, earnest nature, and is capable of such fine, tender feelings one would not credit in the keen, active business-man I know the shrewd Cyrus Harlow's partner must be. But in these four weeks' intimacy, seeing him here in the free domestic atmosphere of his boyhood's home, riding, walking, talking with him daily, I have had many revelations of his inner nature. "It makes a man cold, reserved, isolated," he says, "to have no pleasant home-ties, to live among strangers. The friction of the constantly active machinery of business sharpens the intellect, but it wears out the heart." He made this remark the other evening, when we were talking. I suppose he will marry Kate Harlow by and by, and, in their elegant, refined home, he will forget his loneliness. His wife should possess a warm, æsthetic nature, like his own.

Well, I will not write longer here. I hear his merry laugh—he has a boyish laugh—from

the great barn, where he is helping the men stow away the fragrant hay. Who that saw him up at sunrise this morning, swinging his scythe broadly with the mowers, would imagine him a city lawyer? His hands are browner than they were when he came here, and his forehead is sunburnt, too. I believe I am brown as a gypsy myself; he said I looked like one, the other day, when he put a splendid crimson cardinal-flower in my black hair, down by the brook-side in the woods. I certainly look and feel far unlike the pale, worn woman who left the stifled city with the early May-time. I had grown so tired of the shadows of high brick walls that "I go in the sun, now, when I might go in the shade," Mr. Meredith says, "from a pure womanly spirit of opposition." He loses no opportunity to tease me. I wonder why he never asks me in what portion of the city I make my home. That would be only natural; but I really begin to believe—what is often said of our sex—that *women* possess all the curiosity. I should have asked a hundred questions where he asks none. Perhaps, though, it is because his circle of acquaintances is circumscribed to the aristocratic limits of P— Square, and he would not want to recognize, on return to town, one whose means will not permit a first-class boarding-house. If I thought *that*—but no! I am foolish! That was a puerile thought, and as unworthy myself as him. I will be content to enjoy his society here, and let Miss Harlow engross it for all the future.

Later—Afternoon.

Mr. Meredith came in this morning, tired and heated from his labors in the barn. I did not know he was lying on the lounge in the cool sitting-room, as I went down for a book I had left there, for the shutters were partially drawn. But he spoke, rising.

"What volume have you there, Miss 'Cassy?"

He has called me that of late.

"Mrs. Browning's Poems."

He came forward. "Won't you sit down here by the window—I will open the shutter—and read me something, while I play 'shiftless,' as Aunt Ophelia hath it, in this comfortable rocker? or are you busy—engaged in writing? I saw you up at your window, as I came in. You must be an indefatigable correspondent!"

"O no, not particularly so!" I answered, smiling, for I have been writing a long periodical article. "What particular poem shall I read you, Mr. Meredith? Have you any preference for Mrs. Browning's?"

"None. I do not know much of these latter-day poets, though I may shock your taste by confessing it," he answered. "I had a Byronic age once, but latterly I have eschewed everything of his but 'Childe Harold.' I read *that* sometimes, when I am misanthropic. Bryant I place at the head of American poets; Longfellow, Field, Lowell, I read sometimes, in hours of leisure; but these lady poets, I must confess an ignorance of them, even if it involves an acknowledgment of being behind the age. You read a great deal, Miss 'Cassy'?"

"Considerable! But, indeed, you should have read Mrs. Browning, Mr. Meredith! You have lost much," I said.

"Possibly. But I am one of those who believe, with a sort of conservatism, that the whole of written poetry may be found on the pages of Homer, Milton, Shakspeare, and the Book of Isaiah. Others may write much and well, but they will only give variations on the original theme." He said this in a sort of quiet, assured way; but it set me to thinking.

"Then you deny the inspiration of our modern poets?" I said, at length. "Because a Jenny Lind has sung, you deny the gift of voice in a Sontag; or, to go back to a more distant age, because Socrates was a philosopher, you deny a Sir Isaac Newton! What a poverty-stricken world you would make of it, Mr. Meredith! but you shall not condemn unheard. But tell me, after the hearing, if language ever held truer spirit of poetry than *this*!" And I read that heart-touching wail over England's human slaves—"The Cry of the Children."

He listened in a kind of rapt surprise. I could see the red, indignant blood come and go on his cheeks. "Shameful!" he said, when I had ceased, "shameful, that such things be in any land, much less in the enlightened country of our ancestors! I am glad I did not visit these factories when in England, where they grind out the souls of the poor, and where the children 'die before their time!' We all know that these things exist; but it stirs up the blood to hear it set forth like *that*. A perfect word-picture, and a stirring one at that!"

"Then you acknowledge that a little of the spirit of poetry might have been rescued from Homer, Milton, and so forth, to be bestowed on Mrs. Browning?" I queried, mischievously.

"Oh, pshaw!" And he laughed and colored a little. "You women have a way of taking one up so! But that's a regular society poem—it shows up social evils. If a woman wrote it, she's got a *masculine* mind. I'll bet considerable, your Mrs. Browning is strong-minded,

and that volume doesn't contain one real, tender, domestic heart-poem!"

I smiled, and turned to that exquisite lyric which always moves me strangely—"Bertha in the Lane." I read it to its close.

"I submit; and, like *Oliver Twist*, I shall ask for 'more,'" he said, when I had finished. "Read me *this*." Turning over the leaves of the book, he had taken "Loved Once!"

My voice had trembled as I closed, and I hoped he would not ask me to read more; but I read the poem selected; then rose.

"Stay, please!" he said. "Don't hurry off above stairs! I want to talk a little. That 'Bertha in the Lane' was a sweet poem, a beautiful revelation of an unselfish soul. Do you believe there are such in the world now? Souls, I mean, who would be thus willing to resign their only beloved to another, like Bertha? Under the same circumstances, I mean?"

"I believe he or she who would struggle to win a love that belongs to another, or to retain a waning love, is as guilty of sin as he who would steal his neighbors' goods or bind a captive against his will! And, if they do, they must scorn themselves, and feel humiliated ever after!" I said this proudly, for his eyes were on my face.

"And so you fully credit, and, if called upon, would endure this 'love's divine self-abnegation' whereof Mrs. Browning writes? And what is that you just read?"

*"Those never loved
Who dream that they loved once!"*

Did you ever love, Cassy?" And again I felt his eyes upon my face.

"Never!"

I think my tone had something so assured, so concentrated, and withal so entire in it, that it disappointed him. He looked keenly at me. I was thinking how self-deceived I had been six years earlier in my life; and he was thinking of—I don't know what.

"And yet you have *suffered*."

"How do you know that? At least, what cause have you for thinking that?" I answered, half in surprise, yet retaining my self-possession.

"Oh, we legal gentlemen are schooled in heart-craft," he answered, smilingly. "We have a faculty of reading hearts in faces."

"Then mine must sadly belie me," I answered; "or your legal eyes are for once glaucous! And, if I *have* suffered, be sure no heart malady laid the foundation of the disease."

"And you deny that you ever *loved*?" he asked, still regarding me fixedly.

"Most assuredly!" was my reply.

Stooping, just then, to restore me the volume, which had slid to the carpet, a miniature fell from his vest pocket. He recovered it and passed it to me with the remark, "It is Kate Harlow. She gave it to me the day she left for Nahant, bidding me not forget her. Do you think her handsome?"

"Such a face would be called so—I believe the original is, Mr. Meredith. You could scarcely need the 'counterfeit presentment' to conjure a remembrance of her charms."

The words were assured and cool, as I handed the picture back. I think my manner was so, for the gaze which met his was firm and level. I felt that I could defy him *then* to read my heart on my face. I rose to leave the parlor. As he was restoring the miniature to his pocket, I saw him covertly bite his under lip.

"Must you go? Promise me, first, to ride down to the beach with me, after tea. The evening will be a magnificent one, for the moon is at her full."

"Thank you, but I hardly see how I can, to-night. I told your Aunt Sarah I would walk over to the village with her," I replied.

"Oh, Aunt Sarah will let you off, I am sure. I will take her over myself, in the phaeton. It is three miles to the village."

"But I had rather you would not ask her. Three miles will not weary me or her either. Your aunt is a great walker," I persisted.

"As you will," he replied, with a little pique in his manner. "I will not insist upon it, since you seem disposed to deny me. But I shall go back to the city soon, and I had hoped we would not grow to be enemies at parting. You remember our compact, the first day we met? and we have been friends so long."

It was foolish, this feeling which prompted my denial. Would he not be likely to suspect my true feelings? I was foolish, indeed; I might let him, at least, bear away kindly memories of me. But, after what I had said, I could not yield with a good grace.

"If I had not promised your aunt," I said, as a sort of compromise.

"Will you ride with me to-morrow night, Miss 'Cassy'?"

"Thank you, I will, Mr. Meredith."

I said it cheerfully.

"Thanks! We will look upon the sea once again in company. I think I shall leave Rye-field day after to-morrow, though I have not mentioned it before. Mr. Harlow writes every day for my return."

"And Kate, too, I suppose," I said, mentally, in bitterness, as I gained my chamber. "And

then he will go back and forget me and all these beautiful weeks we have passed together. I shall meet them some time in the street, she leaning on his arm—he, her lover or husband."

I wish this last ride were over! I wish it were all over, and he were gone!

August 22d.

How can I write of this new, strange joy flooding all my heart? How can I think calmly in this new, sweet life upon which I have entered? I suppose I shall grow quieter by and by; I shall get used to happiness. It is so long since I had any one to care for me—so long since any one entered within the hedge-rows of my heart to plant sweet love-roses! and now that it should be *he*, of all the world! I would not have believed it yesterday, if one had come to me and told me I should pass from the bleak land of still life to this living, breathing reality. Yesterday, an isolation from the great heart of love; to-day, bound with strong cords I would not break. And to think he has chosen me—*he*, so good, so strong, so noble!

But I will write it all out calmly here. Mayhap, I shall thus still this wild surging sea of happiness which breaks over the hitherto sandy wastes of my being. It seems like the tales I have woven from my own brain—like telling what has befallen a third party—as I write it here.

Last night, when the sun was dropping, like a great globe of fire, into his crimson-draped bed among the western hills, Mr. Meredith brought round his horse, and we rode slowly down to the sea-shore. It is but four miles distant—the salt sea air floats up here often at twilight—and we drove leisurely. The sun was down when we reached the sands, but the deep summer twilight lingered over the land and waters. I had not talked much as we rode along; indeed, Mr. Meredith did not seem to expect it, for he filled all the time in his own way, speaking of many things—of foreign lands where he has travelled, for he was abroad a year with Mr. Harlow's family, he tells me—and it was very grateful to me that he did not seem to require any effort on my part, only to sit beside him and listen. So he talked till we came quite down to the shore; then there was a silence, and, letting the reins fall loosely, we rode very slowly along the sands. And, for myself, to sit there in the silence—to withdraw my thoughts from the contrast of my own bare, toiling life with the one enriched by travel he had just described—to banish the idea which had arisen before me, "If my father had lived,

I, too, should have visited the Old World"—to still my heart, and sit there in the dusky twilight, heeding, hearing nothing save the voice of the eternal waters—this was for what I struggled. And the waters stilled me—the murmuring voice of the sea soothed me; the soft plash of the waves on the beach seemed to wash away all thoughts of unrest from my heart, bringing me quietude, peace.

"You love the sea?" said Mr. Meredith. "It seems to have a peculiar hold on your affections."

I had not been conscious that he was regarding me; but the twilight was not dark enough to hide the intense gaze I raised my eyes to encounter.

"It is my father's grave! Do you wonder, now, that the sea is dear to me, Mr. Meredith?"

This was the first time I had ever spoken to him of anything connected with my past life; but the time, the place, the influences were peculiarly softening. I burst into tears. He suffered me to weep myself calm, then said, kindly: "Forgive me, Miss 'Cassy; I did not intend to call up painful memories. Will you tell me something of yourself—your past? Be assured I do not ask from idle curiosity, but as a sincere friend."

In another mood, I might have rendered an evasive answer, or waived the subject with a light, jesting remark; but his manner and words were so respectful, and, withal, so sincere, that I felt I could trust him. Keep careful watch and ward over our feelings as we may, there are seasons when the ebb-tides will flow, when the heart longs for human sympathy, and we must speak outright; so, sitting there in the twilight, I told him all. I kept back nothing, not even my *passage d'amour* with Montague Livingstone Wentworth, his desertion in the dark days of adversity, my loneliness in the days following my bereavement, and, lastly, my brain-and-pen labors these last solitary six years of my life. He only laughed a low, quiet laugh when I recounted the story of my *grande passion*, as I called it; but he heard me through silently, when I was telling of my life there in the city, then, when I had finished, said—and I knew, by his tone, that there was a sparkle of mischief in his eyes: "And to think my good Aunt Sarah has been harboring a *blue*, a 'strong-minded' woman, all these months!" And he went off into an immoderate burst of laughter.

"The discovery seems to amuse you vastly, Mr. Meredith," I said, half tartly.

"It does; and not only ought it to *amuse*,

but *amaze* me, Miss Bowen, that I have actually lived a whole month in the same house with the lady in question, on terms of peace and quietness!" Then, relapsing into a graver mood, he continued, in a friendly tone: "But you lead an isolated life in the midst of your labors. It cannot wholly suit you, this life, Miss 'Cassy, for you were made for better things than to thus ceaselessly toil at the treadmill of brain labor. You possess all the gentler feminine domestic qualities, and, by and by, I suppose, will be making some man happy in the different sphere of *home*?" He said this inquiringly.

"However fashionable it may be for young ladies to wish to declare themselves 'engaged,'" I replied, "I must prove the exception. I shall probably never marry!"

I took a sort of pleasure in saying this—letting him see how little I cared for the attentions which city belles, like Kate Harlow, covet.

"How would you like to *travel*—to visit the Old World—*Italy*?" he asked, changing the subject suddenly. "You *should* travel in order to write. Look here, my little friend, I have a confession!" And he laughed. "Do you suppose I didn't *know* you when we met? That I haven't known your *propria persone* all these weeks I have been here at Ryefield? The graver erudition of Coke and Blackstone, it is true, leaves me but little leisure for the light literature of the day; but I have often seen and read your articles in the ladies' magazines—Kate Harlow takes them all—and I have heard her lavish warmest eulogies on them. So my confession is *this*: I recognized your name when Aunt Sarah presented you; and I was confident of you during that first conversation. Haven't I kept the secret well? Give me credit for undue discreetness, Miss 'Cassy! But I was speaking of travel. Now, as I have often noticed in your published articles, you excel in descriptive power—descriptions of natural scenery, men, manners and customs, and so forth—and you should travel for *material*, since you now yourself wedded to this literary life!" I was confident he smiled as he uttered these last words.

"There is an old saying, 'See Naples and die!'" I replied; "but I should be well to see Italy and live, even if I never put pen to paper again. But it is a fairy-land I never expect to reach!" And I sighed.

"What if you were to fall asleep now, and, on waking, find yourself transported the other side of the great water?" he asked, smilingly.

"I should think that the dainty Puck, who

'puts a girdle round the earth in forty minutes,' had a hand in the matter," I laughed; "but I fear I should scarcely credit the evidence of my waking senses. I should believe I was in Magic Land."

"'Magic Land!' Ah, that recalls an exquisite poem I read the other day, which haunts me like a dream. Let me repeat it, please, for it conjured up again all my own sensations on the morning we anchored in the Bay of Naples." And, slightly leaning forward, with his eyes bent dreamily out on the sea, he repeated, in a low, deep-toned voice:—

"By woodland belt, by ocean bar,
The full south breeze our foreheads fann'd,
And, under many a yellow star,
We dropped into the Magic Land
There every sound and every sight
Mean more than sight and sound elsewhere!
Each twilight star a twofold light;
Each rose a double redness, there.
By ocean bar, by woodland belt,
Our silent course a siren led,
Till dark in dawn began to melt
Through the wild wizard work o'erhead
A murmur from the violet vales!
A glory in the goblin dell!
There Beauty all her breast unveils,
And Music pours out all her shell.
We watched toward the land of dreams
The fair moon draw the murmuring main;
A single thread of silver beams
Was made the monster's rippling chain.
We heard, far off, the siren's song;
We caught the gleam of seamaid's hair;
The glimmering isles and rocks among
We moved through sparkling, purple air,
Then morning rose, and smote from far
Her elfin harps o'er land and sea;
And woodland belt and ocean bar
To one sweet note sigh'd—Italy!"

"What think you of the poem?" he asked, after a little silence, broken only by the rippling breakers

"It is *more* than beautiful!" I answered, with a long, deep inspiration, for I had sat with hushed breath—"it is *exquisite*! How like Tennyson—

'And, under many a yellow star,
We dropp'd into the Magic Land!'

Oh, I envy you, Mr. Meredith, your sojourn there!"

He smiled. "You have an enthusiastic nature," he said. "You should visit Italy! you may, some day, stand under its serene skies, and wander through its grape-purpled valleys; but, do you know that, since we have been sitting here in the twilight, I have thought of a

land which would possess for you a far more appreciated and native air than the clime of Italy! You cannot guess *what* land I mean, Miss 'Cassy!"

"Indeed I cannot, unless you mean—Heaven!" I replied, looking up and smiling in quiet wonder. "I hope you don't want to send me there yet awhile, Mr. Meredith, for I shall be very content if I reach it by and by."

"No, not Heaven yet awhile, 'Cassy"—and it thrilled me as he laid his hand on mine; "at least, not that upper abode you mean, though I hope we may both be so unspeakably happy as to reach there some time, together; but there is a lower heaven—a 'Magic Land' more fair than Italy, which your feet should walk in *here*—I mean the magic land of *Home*! And, 'Cassy—so lonely, so beloved—will you not give me consent to guide and dwell with you there?" And in an instant I was drawn to his throbbing heart.

Who would have believed it, that he could have so concealed his feelings all that time? for he told me, afterward, that he had loved me from the first. I scarcely could. I asked him, after I had grown calmer from my passion of tears, what Kate Harlow would say; but he replied that she would love me like a sister—he had long been like a brother to her. And then, while he turned his horse's head homeward, he planned everything in his own way, and I was not "strong-minded" enough to resist. He says we must be married soon, before he leaves Ryefield; that my pen and papers must be locked up, and I must devote one year of my life to learning to love him as well as I "doted" on Montague Livingstone Wentworth.

I heard him passively, like one in a dream; I wonder if I am now dreaming, *now*, this August morning, as I sit and write! But, no! I hear his foot on the stairs—his voice: "Come down, 'Cassy! At that pen again, I'll warrant! I'll levy an 'attachment,' and place it under arrest for safe keeping! Hurry, please! Here's Aunt Sarah wanting to consult you about certain loaves of cake for a certain occasion!"

Later.

"The Lor'!" exclaimed good Mrs. Hull, taking me into her arms as I descended to the sitting-room. "To think 'Lisha's been and told me—and, if I'd *planned* it all, it couldn't a come more to my mind! How dreadful pleased Amos 'll be! 'Twas only yesterday he said how natural like it seemed to have you in the house—jest like one of our own. Dear children! I'm

so glad you chose her, 'Lisha! And to think you never knew she wrote; and 'twan't the *po'try* that done it! But there! go right up stairs, child; it's too bad to keep you a colorin' up so! 'Twan't about the cake, nor nothin' I wanted to speak to you. For shame, 'Lisha! I've allers heard say that lawyers didn't mind sayin' anything as comes into their heads!" And under cover of good Aunt Sarah's advice, I escaped to my room; though Elisha shook his finger at me and bade me not exceed his warrant of "just ten minutes."

Elisha. That is not a romantic name—I never should have chosen it for a hero—but there is no other name in the world I like so well *now*. How could I help liking *him*? But I wonder what he saw to love in *me*! I will go and ask him; and if he is quite sure he does not like Kate Harlow best, after all? I know what he will tell me, though. There, he is calling! "*Cassy*!"

Good-by, my pen! Elisha says you must have a long rest now. I will hide my journal before I go down, that nobody can ever see or read what I have written here, unless I read it to him some day.

"Come down, 'Cassy!" he calls again; "or I shall come up and fetch you!"

"Yes, yes, I'm coming! Dear Elisha, I'm coming!"

LOVE'S MIRACLE; OR, THE CHARM OF MUSIC.

BY J. W. BRYCE.

That man that hath no music in himself,
 Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
 Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
 The motions of his spirit are as dull as night,
 And his affections dark as Erebus.
 Let no such man be trusted.

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

ARE the blessings of music, in its influence upon our social comfort and our happiness, sufficiently well understood? I have thought not, albeit a most unmusical person myself, at least so far as talent and cultivation in the science are concerned. Who, that has felt its charms when doubts perplexed and cares gathered thick around him, but must acknowledge his gratitude to the Soother and the Comforter? Who that has known its inspiration at some moment when the latent fire slumbered, waiting only a magical breath to wake it into flame, but must own himself tributary to its power? Yet how few of us cultivate a closer intimacy with the angel who so often visits us! I know there are a thousand reasons for the neglect of music, and yet not one of them which is valid. It is the one talent which we hide in the earth, and the Master might justly condemn us therefor to outer darkness. It is no excuse to say that we lack capacity, opportunity, means, or that so-and-so plays or sings better, or that we have not the time to spare. It is all a wilful closing of the eyes and hardening of the heart. *No house should be without music.* The simplest strain has its mission and its influence; the humblest song awakes emotion in some heart and tends to good.

That music excites a true and honest enthusiasm, quells the darker passions, and exerts a purifying influence over the human mind, there can be no doubt. All that is heroic in the soul, all that is soft and yielding in the heart, all that is generous and noble in human nature yields its treasure to music's magic touch, as freely as the rock of Horeb did its refreshing waters to that of the prophet's wand. A bad man may love music, but no man is bad while under its influence. It may be said that music has often lent its charms to immorality and vice, that ribald glees and Bacchanalian songs have too often contributed to the down-

fall of youth; but the fault was only that the bad ministers at her shrine perverted her ravished beauties to unholy purposes. It chastens the impulses in the hearts of a thousand where it degrades them in one. It is the universal language of emotion, which needs no translation, since it is everywhere understood and appreciated. Its eloquence surpasses all other modes of expression, and draws the most certain tribute to its appeals; and while prosperity revels in its unrivalled, but innocent enjoyments, poverty may draw not only comfort, but sustenance from its treasures. Oliver Goldsmith, the most charming of English poets, travelled through Europe, with his flute for a letter of credit, and the little foreigners who almost desecrate the art by their crude efforts in our streets gather pennies even where avarice reigns. Let me give an interesting reminiscence of my student life, while talking of music.

When I was at B—— College, Kentucky, I had a friend who drew as largely on my love and esteem as ever did mortal man, and well was he worthy of confidence, for a nobler youth than Albert Kline I never knew. He was of German extraction, and there was a dignity and reserve in his manner, but a depth of feeling and enthusiasm in his nature characteristic of his origin. He was as true and devoted as a knight of the olden chivalry, and as generous as a prince; and he was a prince, a monarch, for in one fair bosom he reigned supreme.

How shall I describe Hetty Buford, with her blue laughing eyes, and the shower of golden curls that fell around her proud little head, the sylphlike form that floated in graceful undulations through the dance, and her bewitching smile, that beamed with delight! A bright and joyous creature was Hetty, and if she loved Albert Kline, with his manly beauty and his noble disposition, in the depths of his great heart was her image shrined and worshipped. Hetty Buford was a being of exquisite sensibilities; her soul was attuned to poetry and music. How often have I seen her hang on his arm, in some evening walk, listening in rapt attention to the eloquent words that fell from his lips, and drinking in the thoughts of his

inspired genius! Strange to say, however, there was one subject on which a perfect sympathy did not seem to exist between them, and that was music. Albert was fond enough of a song, and when Hetty warbled and trilled forth her birdlike notes, he found it very pleasant to listen, but he had no talent that way himself. He was never known to sing a song or touch a musical instrument. In speaking, the modulations of his voice were exquisite, and his ear was sensitive to the euphony of language; but his thoughts and feelings had never found expression in music. He had borne the jokes of his fellow collegians on this subject with seeming indifference; but when rallied by Hetty, whose wit was piquant, as well as playful, a shade would sometimes cross his brow. What malign influence is it that loves to pick a flaw in the most seemingly perfect human bliss? Whence that little subtle spirit of mischief that finds its way into the hearts of the truest and fondest, and sows dissension there? Alas, no human mind was ever in perfect tune; there are strings that will jar at the slightest touch, and send wild discord through the soul. Hetty Buford, piqued by some allusion among her companions to this defect in the model of her faultless hero, rallied Albert a little too sharply, and then, in conclusion, bade him playfully become a minstrel, on forfeit of her high displeasure. What his reply was I do not know, but from that hour a cloud seemed to have settled between them, and their hearts were estranged. I saw that my friend suffered, and, to my inquiries as to the cause, he returned a frank reply. He was wounded not only in his love, but his vanity.

"But, my dear Albert," said I, "suppose you were really to learn music. I know that you have it in you."

"No, no, Jack, I have not the slightest talent that way; and if I had, do you suppose I would acknowledge myself the slave of a girl's whim? Must I crouch and play the fool for her idle jests?"

I pushed my chance suggestion no further in his then mood; but, on a subsequent occasion, I was still more unfortunate. In a moment of confidence, I got him to attempt to sing a verse, for the foolish idea possessed me that he really had musical talents. I forget by what device I trapped him, but remember distinctly his failure was so decided that I laughed right out. From that moment, he would not bear any allusion to Hetty Buford, or his former relations with her; and I loved him too sincerely, and was too sorry for the unhappiness I

knew he suffered, ever to advert to the subject.

And how was it with Hetty herself? To the world she was as gay and brilliant as ever; nay, if anything, more so; but I, who possessed the key to her thoughts, as it were, who watched her closely, could detect something forced in her manner, and an unwonted asperity and sarcasm in her tone. With me, when by ourselves, she was natural, though less gay; but she never mentioned Albert's name, nor, much as I loved and admired them both, did I dare to interfere. True, I was a good deal with her, and watched her with jealous care, and she seemed to be thankful for my attention, and to regard me as a brother.

The estrangement had taken place not long before vacation, and Albert had gone away. On his return, he seemed to have lost his taste for society, and became a harder student than ever. Two months more passed, and the winter set in. There was much gayety in the little town where we were, but it was seldom my friend would join in it. Once, on the occasion of a brilliant party, to be given at the splendid residence of General Buford, Hetty's father, which was about a mile from town, and that once only, did Hetty allude to him.

"Will you be so good as to say to your friend, Mr. Kline, that we will be happy to see him!" said she to me in such a quiet, matter of course way that I could only bow acquiescence.

I conveyed the invitation, and was somewhat surprised when Albert exclaimed cheerfully:—

"Well, Jack, I will certainly go with you; I feel like a little relaxation."

The party was a magnificent one, and everybody seemed to enjoy it in the highest degree. Albert and Hetty met calmly and politely, as the commonest acquaintances might. We had dancing, and music, and song, alternately. After a quadrille, there was a group near the piano, listening to a duet; as it finished, one of the performers, a sprightly girl with whom Albert had danced, arose, and, turning to him, exclaimed, in a tone half mischievous, half playful:—

"Oh! now this is such a love of a party, Mr. Kline, and we only lack one thing more to make it perfection."

"And what is that, Miss Sally?"

"A song from Mr. Kline."

"O yes! a song from Mr. Kline! Do, Mr. Kline," exclaimed half a dozen voices. And instantly there commenced those teasing entreaties which girls know so well how to employ. Some of them were in earnest, supposing

he really sang, and others were only having a jost.

I looked at Albert, and was astonished to find he was so little annoyed under the circumstances. True, there was a slight flush on his brow, and rather a troubled look in his eye, but he did not manifest the signs of displeasure which I expected. I next turned to Hetty, who was on my arm; she seemed mortified and vexed.

"Do come away," said she to me; "I don't like it at all; it is too bad, exposing him so."

There was a conservatory adjoining the parlor, and, sympathizing with her feelings, I led her there. It was the first time any opening had occurred for me to broach the subject, and I determined to avail myself of it; but it required some resolution to begin, and while I was preparing, and Hetty was nervously pulling to pieces the leaves of a rich plant, there was a sudden silence among the chattering in the parlor which attracted the attention of us both. Then the keys of the piano were struck by a bold and skilful hand, and the tones of a rich and manly voice swelled through the room. At its very first accents Hetty started as if shot, and then, with lips apart, and pale cheek, and eyes distended, she listened as if her very soul lived only in the sounds.

It was a ballad of the olden times—I have forgotten the words, but not the subject. It represented a bright and beautiful lady, possessed of wealth, and love, and high degree, and all that the human heart could seemingly desire, but cursed with an unsatisfied disposition. She sends her knight on various perilous enterprises to secure some trifling object of her fancy, which is discarded as soon as obtained. At last, he is brought wounded and apparently dying to her feet, holding in his grasp, nevertheless, the trophy which she had coveted. His fidelity, and the touching language in which he addresses her—loyal and loving, without a murmur of reproach—awakens remorse in her bosom, and, kneeling by his side, she vows the severest penance for her fault, and the most ample amendment if he recovers. Whether he did so or not, the ballad, most provokingly, left us in doubt; but there was a pathos in the poetry, and a magic in the singer's voice, that left few dry eyes among the fair auditors. As for Hetty, the bright drops rolled down her pallid cheek, and her slight form was convulsed with emotion. I dared not intrude a word, though, ere the song ceased, I had passed my arm around her waist to sup-

port her, and her head had fallen in grief on a brother's shoulder.

For a few seconds, all was silent, except the poor girl's low sobs; then a footman approached I knew right well. I beckoned him to me, and, gently yielding up my charge, I hurried away to the parlor to enjoy the wonder of the guests—my own was full as great—and to cover the retreat of my friend.

"But you deceived me, Albert; you are a musician," said Hetty, gazing fondly on him, as he knelt before her.

"No, dearest, I have learned it all in the last few months for your sake. At first, I was proud and resentful, then better feelings conquered, and I determined in some manner to atone for my fault. In Cincinnati, where I went on business during the vacation, I met an old friend and countryman of my father's; he saw that I was unhappy, and questioned me; I frankly confessed to him the whole cause; he smiled, and assured me there were few persons who could not attain some degree of excellence in music if they would only take the pains, and that in my case there was scarcely a doubt of success. I caught eagerly at the idea, and during the whole vacation I received his instructions, and he is a master in the science. Since my return to college, I have devoted every leisure hour to the studies he pointed out, and my success has been indifferently good."

"My noble Albert! But tell me; the poor knight, did he die?"

"No, they lived long and happily together. His recovery, like my metamorphosis, was LOVE'S MIRACLE!"

MRS. BOWEN'S INVESTMENT.

ONLY FOR HOUSEKEEPERS.

BY ALICE B. HAVEN.

Store is no sore.—Old Proverb.

Mrs. Bowen stood in her kitchen and pondered, in rather a disconsolate mood. It was Monday morning in November, a large wash in progress, Hannah—the “help”—cross because of the extra tablecloths and sheets, occasioned by two unexpected visitors the week before. There was a quilt, too, that Johnny had muddled with unlawful climbing on the bed, and so to an apple on the bureau, and Kate had slipped down and ruined Monday's clean petticoats, so that there were two sets for her in the wash. The tin boiler bubbled and upheaved, so did Hannah's wrath, with every garment that she plunged into her tub, the same slow, determined, spiteful obullition.

Mrs. Bowen was making up her mind on the dinner question. There was cold meat, of course, from Sunday's roast; but cold meat needs trimmings to render it acceptable to mankind in general, and besides Mr. Bowen, there was his mother who was twice as particular, not from a desire to be disagreeable, but because, as an invalid, her appetite was sickly and variable.

Now it is comparatively easy to walk into a good market, with a boy behind you to carry the basket and no compunctions as to prices, and lay out your dinner; but when your only market is a grocery, where they decline sending home parcels, and it is not the habit of the

place in which you live for a housekeeper in respectable circumstances to carry pots of butter and a bunch of turnips, say, through the streets, it is a little puzzling to arrange a meal to the satisfaction of yourself and anybody else, especially when one dollar has to do the duty of five.

“I think,” said Mrs. Bowen, slowly, “I think, Hannah, we will have some potatoes and, and—let me see, well, turnips.”

“The potatoes is all out, ma'am—only two turnips and a half left from Saturday. I don't see why squash, and them cold baked beans, warmed up, won't do.”

“Mother Bowen never eats squash, you know, Hannah, and we had squash yesterday. I must make some change.”

“I can't stop and go and dress, no how!” And Hannah plunged into her tub after a batch of dinner aprons, and rubbed them to within a thread of their lives.

“Why can't you go as you are?” suggested Mrs. Bowen, mildly. “Put on a dry apron, and unpin your frock.”

“I'd like to see myself going into the street looking like this! Well, I would!”

“Dear me, Hannah,” said Mrs. Bowen, driven beyond the limit of caution by this determined resistance, “who do you suppose ever looks at you?”

“'Nuff sight better people than comes to

this house!" And the "help" wrung the suds from her hands with a jerk, to poke down the bubbling, upheaved garments in the boiler, most vigorously. "S'pose I'm going by the carpenter's shop in an old wash-dress? No I ain't—nor the blacksmith's, either, with all them fellers standing 'round. If I've got to go, I've got to dress—that's the hull of it!"

"Well, do hurry, Hannah, for it's a bad drying day, any how; I don't believe you will get the colored clothes out before it rains. A peck of potatoes and half a peck of turnips—oh, and, Hannah, some carrots to stew the meat with. Mother Bowen cannot eat cold mutton. Oh, and, Hannah, there's no whole pepper for the stew either; and get a paper of cinnamon; there was none when I made those apple-pies on Saturday."

Hannah's toilet was not readily accomplished. Mrs. Bowen looked at the clock, and poked the clothes, and made a faint essay at the vacant wash-tub. It took her handmaid just a quarter of an hour to prepare herself to face the carpenter's shop; it was twenty minutes more before she returned—half past ten. In the mean time, Mrs. Bowen thought to save time by getting her pudding ready—a tapioca-pudding, as Mother Bowen considered it "nourishing;" but there were no eggs in the house, and Hannah was out of call. What could be made without eggs? Baked Indian pudding? But that required so much milk—more than could be spared. Apple and tapioca? There was not time for it. Apple-dumplings would take up room on the stove, and washing-days there was none to spare. If she only had those eggs; so many things could be made with eggs, nothing, it seemed to her, without them. The whole twenty minutes was lost in opening boxes that were either empty or nearly so, and ransacking her brain and her cook-book for something that could be made with no eggs and very little sugar, for that last seven pounds of brown sugar seemed to last no time at all.

"Might have kept up the fire, at all events," muttered Hannah, setting down the basket with a thump.

Sure enough, the fire was "way down;" the boiler had to come off, and it was eleven o'clock before steam was got up again, and Hannah once more arrayed for her post.

"Where's the carrots, Eliza? I don't find any in the stew," inquired Mr. Bowen, when dinner was at last served, and his wife, who had been cook, sat down, flushed and worried, for it was late and the children clamorously hungry.

"Hannah forgot to get any at the store, and I could not spare her to go all the way back again."

"Humph! I'd like to see one of my 'prentices forgetting orders. Nobody ever heard of a mutton-stew without carrots. Miserable potatoes, too."

"Yes, there was a great deal of waste in them; and Mr. Bennet charges outrageously. Hannah didn't bring home a cent of change. I don't think he treats us well; I wouldn't deal with him any longer."

"Must, as long as he does with me; you ought to send him word. Turnips! I thought you were going to have cabbage."

"Cabbage is worse than turnips, James," said Mrs. Bowen, senior, feebly, "and the potatoes are so watery. I don't see anything I can eat. No, thank you, I'll wait for the pudding."

"I'm very sorry," Mrs. Bowen began. "Hush, Kate! Mr. Bowen, please speak to those children. I couldn't make the pudding, mother."

The old lady pushed away her plate with an injured look. "It's no consequence; I can do just as well without eating. When people are too old to work, they hadn't ought to eat, I suppose. Don't never trouble yourself to get anything for me."

"I should think, Eliza, that mother might have the little *she* wants. I can do without myself, but *my mother isn't going to*, so long as she lives under my roof."

Feeling all the injustice of the implied reproach from both, and knowing, moreover, how hard she had toiled, Hannah being "as contrary as possible" after her interruption, an angry reply rose to Mrs. Bowen's lips; but she caught the quick eyes of both the children raised to hers, Kate defiantly ready to take sides against "grandmother," whose feebleness sadly interfered with the noisy play of herself and her school companions. "They must not see us quarrel," thought she, remembering the miseries of her own childhood, and how much of filial respect was lost by her from this very cause; but her manner was cold and repellent, and the first part of the meal passed in silence.

Kate sprang up willingly enough to help remove the meat and vegetables. She was always ready for dessert, and followed her mother into the kitchen to find out what it was to be. "Boiled rice and molasses! Is *that* all?"

"I'm so sick of rice, it seems to me I could never taste another mouthful," groaned Mother Bowen, from the next room.

"It's too bad, mother," responded her son, warmly; "I don't see what Eliza was thinking about. If that's all there is"—and he pushed his chair from the table—"I'll be off. I should think, Eliza, you might contrive something a little different."

Mrs. Bowen felt very much like breaking down into a cry, as her husband took his hat and departed for the store, without another word, and his mother settled back into her rocking-chair and drew out her knitting-work. This was the result of a morning's work and contrivance, to say nothing of Hannah's impatient muttering; and yet, scarce as help was, she could not dispense with so neat and active a girl for one fault of temper, especially when Mother Bowen needed so much waiting on.

"Old people's a dreadful trouble, I know, Eliza." And the trembling fingers shook more than ever, as they untangled a knot in the yarn. "I never wanted to outlive my usefulness—never. I'm as great a trial to myself as I am to anybody else, though. It's very hard to feel that you're in everybody's way, and no use to nobody; I hope you'll never live to be old and feel it; but it's likely you will, though, it's likely you will, and then you'll reflect—"

"I think rice and boiled molasses is first-rate, grandma? Hadn't you better have a plateful? Give me some more, mother." And Master John "backed up his plate" as he said this, so did Kate, for all her disappointment; and Mrs. Bowen, refilling them, thought what a blessing strength and a healthy appetite was, and then more particularly of the worn-out body that made a querulous mind.

"It was too bad, mother, when you had set your heart on the pudding," she said. "I was as much disappointed as you was; but it was washing-day, you know, and I did not find out about the eggs until Hannah was gone, and it takes her so long to go to the grocery. Sha'n't I go and make you a cup of tea and some milk toast?"—for, doing without the pudding, milk was fortunately at hand.

"I don't care if I do have a cup of tea; I feel dreadful *gone*, somehow. But don't trouble yourself to wait on me; eat your own dinner, eat your own dinner; when people get old and useless, they can't expect to be waited on."

Mrs. Bowen's dinner had been light enough. It was often so, of late. What with looking to see if Mr. Bowen liked his, and Mother Bowen could eat hers, and that the children were not soiling the tablecloth, so that Hannah would be up in arms, and keeping one ear in the kitchen for breakages and the like, she forgot

that no one offered to help her, or to ask to be helped, if she happened to notice that her plate was empty.

As for Mr. Bowen, he was as much absorbed in business as any Wall Street financier, or Broadway jobber. The town was growing since the Erie railroad had been finished, and trade grew with it. Of late, too, he had commenced manufacturing boots and shoes for the Southern market. He was not above work himself, though he had a shop full of apprentices and journeymen; and then, too, his trips to the city for materials added the little change and stimulus that helped him to the brisk, bustling way which told you in five minutes that he was a money-making man. "Yes," he remarked that very afternoon, to his friend, Mr. Gerry, who often dropped in to bask in the genial heat of the great cylinder stove, on the very comfortable lounge provided for lady customers—"yes, Gerry, I don't think I'd change with any man I know. I don't believe there's a man outside of New York that's got better credit than I have in the Swamp, though I say it myself. There's Jones & Mudford, one of the oldest firms in the city. 'Come right straight to us,' says Mr. Jones, 'always, Mr. Bowen, and we'll do as well by you as anybody can. We don't want your money, we want your custom; that's what we want; I'd like to find a few more of the same sort.' Now, that's what I call gratifying—ha, Gerry?"

"Very," responded Mr. Gerry, elevating his feet to the fender of the glowing cylinder, and his eyes to the arabesque of boots and shoes on the wall overhead.

"Then, too, there's my wife; many a man's been ruined by his wife. Mine don't spend one cent on nonsense; don't catch her with flounces and furbelows. Every dollar goes right into my business; that's the secret of it, you see. I get the best of stock, and plenty of it, and then I can afford to work reasonable; why, there isn't another man in Plumville can begin to manufacture alongside of me. There's Toby, now—"

"Oh, he couldn't lay a straw in your path; he never has what a man wants. I see him coming out of here, every now and then, with a lot of findings."

"That's it, you see. He don't get ahead enough to buy his stock to good advantage; and half the time he gets shaved by some of those outside fellows he deals with. Shiftless kind of a man. Runs to New York twice as often as I do, and spends just so much time and money."

This little conversation having taken place

in the lull of the day's work, just before tea-time, Mr. Bowen proceeded home to partake of that social meal, in the complacent mood which is the result of recounting one's successful achievements, and quite ready to overlook the failure at dinner. He expected, at least, hot biscuit to atone for it; but, on the contrary, he found baker's bread, and he hated baker's bread.

"Flour out, hey? Seems to me fourteen pounds of flour ought to last longer than all this comes to! Not much butter to help it down with, either!"

"It is all there was in the house, and Johnny did not get home from school in time to send to the grocery," said Mrs. Bowen, patiently. "You know you never like to have us borrow."

"No, borrow, no! Go without, twice over; but, I must say, I never saw such providing in my life."

"I had enough, I thought, but Mrs. Toby sent in to get enough for tea, and I never like to refuse her, you know; so I told Hannah to let her have it, without going to see."

"There's a family that's *always* borrowing; she must be as shiftless as her husband."

"The Tobys never did get ahead," remarked Mother Bowen. "'Tain't in 'em. Old 'Lias Toby, now, started in business the same time with your father, and wasn't worth a cent when he died. Some folks just live from hand to mouth."

"A pretty miserable way of living." And reflections on his own forethought and frehandedness supplied the place of sauce to the scanty tea-table; though John and Kate, whose imaginations, however active, could not delude them on this subject, demanded the molasses pitcher, to make up deficiencies.

"Not a rag of clothes dry enough to iron," Hannah stated, encouragingly, as Mrs. Bowen went to inspect the progress of affairs, next morning. "I hung them tablecloths up in the garret, and them starched things 'round the fire all night; jist look at 'em, might as well be right out of the tub this minute. That comes of leaving clothes in the middle of the day to run to the store."

"I know it, Hannah, but we must do the best we can. There's some one knocking; go to the door, for mother never would hear, and Kate has gone to school."

Mrs. Bowen "felt" the damp garments one by one, without the least brightening of the prospect. Hannah returned presently, ushering in a little girl, with a deep cape-bonnet, and a quantity of school-books piled up on her arm.

"Mother sends her compliments, Miss Bowen, and, if it's convenient, she'll come and take tea with you. Jane's gone off again," she added, by way of explanation, entirely on her own account, "and I heard mother say to father, that when we didn't have a girl was a good time to go a visiting, and Sallie and me could come too."

Now, it was not in the least "convenient," with the ironing so far behind. Usually, the clothes were all folded down on Monday night, ready to commence by nine o'clock on Tuesday, when Mrs. Bowen did the fine things and her husband's shirts; but if she should say so, Mrs. Gerry would take mortal offence, especially in the present posture of affairs.

"Very well, Mary Jane, tell your mother that I shall expect her." And, as the hall door closed on the juvenile messenger, she added: "I must put off my ironing till to-morrow, that's all, Hannah, and make some cake. You can do yours just the same, only I didn't want to have to take you off to go to the store this morning, since Johnny got the butter and eggs; but there isn't a bit of lard in the house, and we are out of brown sugar, and Mr. Gerry is so fond of short biscuit. He always expects some kind of meat, so you'll have to stop at the butcher's and tell him to send a small steak. Oh, and I used the last of the tea this morning, all but a small drawing, but it won't be enough for all those people."

"Bringing their young ones along," said Hannah, spitefully. "They'll eat enough for an army. Just about as much consideration as some folks have. 'Tain't no wonder they never get a girl to stay with 'em! Well, if I've got to stop and go, I s'pose I might as well be a-goin'."

Hannah's unusual alacrity was some relief to the pressure of affairs, but it was accounted for when she returned, after an absence of twice the usual length.

"I thought as the clothes wasn't dry, I might jist as well stop to Miss Taylor's and have my new dress tried on; and she found she hadn't got quite enough trimming, so I jist run down to Tripler's and matched it. Didn't take me five minutes, and I knew I shouldn't get out to-night, with all them people coming here to tea."

There was nothing to be said, and no time to send back for saleratus or white sugar, both of which were found "low." Mrs. Bowen was obliged to make her cake of the brown, and had the mortification of finding it heavy. The saleratus did not prove to be sufficient for the

two pans of biscuit—there must be two pans, as the children were coming—and what with the damp clothes, and wasted morning, and the interruptions of the baking, the ironing had made slow progress when Mrs. Gerry arrived, punctually at three o'clock, and Mrs. Bowen felt very little like giving up the afternoon to her entertainment. It was a very fatiguing business, for the visitor was one of those ladies who never suggest a topic for conversation, and consequently long pauses intervene, when the other party feels herself exhausted; and then, too, Mother Bowen, who was fond of company, but whose hearing was impaired as well as her digestion, requested to have each particular remark repeated in a very loud tone. The little Gerrys came from school with Kate, and made so much noise that it was next to impossible to hear one's self think, besides distracting attention to the way they had of handling and looking into everything, much to the detriment of the articles so examined.

"Ah, good-evening, Mrs. Bowen. Just in time, I see"—for, with Mr. Gerry's arrival, an appetising odor of steak was diffused through the sitting-room. "I've saved my appetite for you; I always do when I'm coming here. I tell mother 'twould be a sin and a shame to spoil one of Mrs. Bowen's good teas by eating any dinner beforehand. How d'y'e do, Bowen, how d'y'e do? Supper just coming in, you see. Where shall I sit? Anywhere. You don't make a stranger of me, you know."

"Not commonly." And Mr. Bowen, who liked his guests, and had a sharp appetite for his share of the good things provided on their account, drew the steel across the carver with an air of keen expectancy.

"That's just what I said to mother this morning, when we proposed coming over here to-night. 'It's ironing-day,' says she, 'and I don't know as it will be convenient for Mrs. Bowen.' 'Oh, la,' says I, 'they never put themselves out of the way for us; go when you will,' says I, 'such a first-rate cook as Mrs. Bowen wouldn't mind; always sure to have something on hand.'"

Mrs. Bowen reflected on her neglected ironing, her hurried, fretted day, and judiciously busied herself with the tea things. She could not quite make up her mind to assent, with the cheerfulness it seemed to demand, to Mr. Gerry's statement.

"Do make yourself at home, and pass the biscuit," said Mr. Bowen, to cover this little backwardness. "Have a biscuit, mother? Help yourself to butter, Mrs. Gerry."

"I'll have some cold bread, Eliza." And Mrs. Bowen's worst fears were realized by the expression of her mother-in-law's face when she said it. "It's as much as my night's rest is worth to tech one of them biscuit; they're just as heavy as lead."

"Dear me, how could it have happened!" Guilty Mrs. Bowen, who knew very well how it had come to pass. "Sugar and milk, Mr. Gerry? I'm very sorry, and there isn't a bit of cold bread in the house. The flour was out last night, and though we mixed right away the minute it came, it's just gone into the oven."

"I s'pose I can have a cracker, then," said her mother-in-law, in the usual injured tone.

"Now, don't say one word." And Mrs. Gerry made a great show of buttering one of the unfortunate rolls. "I guess you must have got hold of one that wasn't done. I can't seem to make such biscuit as yours, no how, Mrs. Bowen; father often says to me I oughter come and take lessons; and such beautiful light cake, too, as you always have. I don't see how you manage. Do take a biscuit, father. Sha'n't I help you to some butter, Mr. Bowen?"

Mr. Bowen, having by this time distributed the steak, held forth his plate at the invitation, drew it in, tasted it, examined it, and looked very much disturbed. "Bad butter again! Well, I must say, Mr. Gerry, that it wasn't much use saving your appetite to-day. Heavy bread and strong butter!"

Here a portentous glance was aimed at the tea-tray, but missed fire. Mrs. Bowen knew it was not her fault, and was determined not to take it.

"Seems to me you've lost your knack lately, 'Liza," remarked Mother Bowen, pertinaciously. "There ain't much variety in soda-biscuit." And she took one up to crumble into her tea, with the air of a martyr. "You don't seem to eat much, Mrs. Gerry. Won't you help yourself to some of the preserves? Quinces before you, ain't they, 'Liza? Plums on the other side. Do have some greengages, to help the biscuit down."

Mr. Gerry's well-preserved appetite seemed ready to cope with all difficulties, judging from the quantity he ate; and whether it was the assistance of the plums or not, Mrs. Gerry did not fall far behind, helping herself twice to cake, and passing her cup so often that she had finished the third before Mrs. Bowen had tasted her first. The children, who were seated afterwards at the places of their respective parents, did the repast ample justice. But,

for all that, Mr. Bowen's enjoyment of the visit was entirely lost, and his wife's would have been, if there had ever been any to lose. She knew that the minute the front door had closed upon their visitors, she would be arraigned for the failure, and prepared to meet it with what amiability she could.

"Now, you know that isn't so at all, James," she said, in reply to an irritated charge of "leaving everything to Hannah," and neglecting her household generally. "You know very well that I hardly stir out of the house, even to an evening meeting. When have I been out to spend the afternoon? Not since we were at Mrs. Gerry's, and they've been here three times since."

"If it had been any one but Gerry I should not have cared so much; but when I like a man, I like to see him at home in my house and treated as if he was somebody. Mother, too—I don't believe she has had a thing she could eat for the last three days. She hasn't got very long to live, and it's a pity that we can't make her comfortable while she is here."

"I do my best." And Mrs. Bowen said it slowly, with a sigh, to think how little all her worry and care was appreciated, after all.

"Well, I know you do, sometimes." Mr. Bowen was not insensible to his wife's patience and uniform kindness towards his mother; besides, he had relieved his mind, and the reaction was beginning to change his views of things a little. "Only sometimes it does seem fated that she shouldn't have anything she can touch. I don't see into it."

"I do; it's not having the things I need right on hand."

"Don't you have what you want, I'd like to know? Did you ever come to me for a dollar, and not get it? though I must say it seems to me it's pretty much every day, about as regular as I come in to dinner."

"I don't believe you'd feel it half as much, James, if you'd get things by the quantity; and it would be twice as convenient. It takes just about half Hannah's time to run to the grocery; and when you get things by the small quantity, they don't seem to go half as far. My father always used to get a firkin of fall butter, and a firkin of winter butter, for instance, and a barrel of flour, at a time."

"Flour's seven dollars a barrel! My goodness, Eliza!"

"I guess it's more than seven dollars, getting it as we do; and what difference does it make whether you pay it all at once or a few shillings at a time? How do you do at the

shop? I've heard you tell many a time about the advantage there was in having a large stock and getting the best."

"Oh, that's quite another thing; business and housekeeping are two different things. I can't take money out of my business, and buy up a grocery store."

"But it all goes in the course of the year. What difference does it make? If you only knew how I hated to ask you for money! Time and time again I go without things because I hate to ask you; and then, when I come to get dinner, they are the very things I want."

"Where you going to keep them? I've heard you say more than once that you hadn't closet-room enough."

"I could take the small bed-room in the attic, and have a lock put on the door. I could put a barrel of flour in the kitchen, you know, and there's plenty of cellar room for vegetables and such things. I know you could get them better and cheaper from the farmers."

"Dreadful convenient to mount boxes and barrels up two pair of stairs."

"But it would only be once a year, James, and then you could send one of the men over from the shop. If you only *knew* how much time and how many steps it would save, to say nothing of money!"

"I don't see any saving about it." And yet Mr. Bowen stood convicted by his own express declaration of the same principle to Mr. Gerry the day before, and the conversation returned rather uncomfortably to mind. "What do you want now, s'posing you could get it?"

"Well, if we had five or six gallons of oil at once, for instance, there would not be such a bother about the lamps; and a barrel of brown sugar and half a barrel of white. Oh, I don't know. A small box of tea, you know, just what we use every day of our lives. Don't you believe you'd get a better quality, for one thing? Don't you know some wholesale place in New York where you could be sure of a good article?"

"Why, yes, there's Ladd & Coffin. Ladd is Mudford's son-in-law; they'd introduce me, I guess; but I can't spare the money, and it ain't worth while to talk any more about it."

"You spare the money when you want stock."

"Of course I do. Where would any of the bread and butter come from? I'd look pretty well running down to New York every six weeks; besides, it works up to better advantage." By which remark Mr. Bowen lost ground on his side of the argument, and the opposition was not slow to follow it up.

"Well, well, I'll think about it," was his conclusion, after another half hour of discussion; "that will do for to-night. What you going to have for breakfast to-morrow morning—fried potatoes?"

"I don't believe we have enough in the house. Hannah couldn't bring but half a peck yesterday, on account of the turnips; and they don't last us any time, the children eat so many."

"Well, ham and eggs, then; it's all the same to me."

"It's too late for Hannah to go for the ham."

"Anything, anything. It's a good while since you've had any corn bread, though."

"I know it is; but there's always so many things we must have, that I neglect to send for meal."

"Get something, then; suit yourself." And, with a glimmering comprehension of his wife's difficulties, Mr. Bowen betook himself to repose, and left her to puzzle it out at her leisure.

It was almost the first of January before he became a final convert to her doctrine, however; and it cost him severe self-denial to refrain from taking four shares in a foundry about to be established in Plumville, and apply the money to fill the formidable order presented by Mrs. Bowen on his trip to town.

"A saving in the end," said she, consolingly, as she placed four pocket-handkerchiefs and two pairs of clean socks in the carpet-bag she was making ready for him.

"Not much saving, I guess; I give you all you can make off of this year's expenses, next Christmas; it's cost over three hundred, first and last." Which promise Mrs. Bowen did not lose sight of; and, when the time came, claimed twenty-one dollars, accordingly, and demonstrated her right to it with pencil and paper, much to her husband's amazement.

"It will just buy me a new winter bonnet and black silk dress, Mr. Bowen; and it's some time since you've had any fault to find, or mother either."

"True enough, Eliza, things do seem to go considerably smoother, and I wouldn't have thought it would have made so much difference. Mother was saying, only yesterday, that you seemed to have found your old knacks again. White sugar not out yet, and all that tea left? Well, you have managed first rate; pretty near earned it, haven't you? Not to speak of how that money would have gone smash in the foundry; completely fell through, Gerry says; I hate to *lose* a thing, dreadfully. I'd rather spend it twice over, any time."

Mr. Bowen ceased to dwell on his own good management, for a time, and made his wife's talent for administration the theme of discourse with his particular friends, the appearance of the black silk dress in company being the signal for relating her little achievement, and, to his eyes, she had not had on such a becoming one since her wedding-day.

MRS. BOWEN'S PARLOR AND SPARE BED-ROOM

BY ALICE B. HAVEN.

RURAL architecture was not the rage in Plumville; its inhabitants, as a general thing, were too much occupied in building up their fortunes. Mr. Bowen's house was a fair specimen of those occupied by the business part of the town, though, to be sure, Lawyer Green had a stono mansion fronted by a strip of land which his wife called lawn, and opposite to it rose the white Grecian temple, with huge wooden pillars from piazza to roof, in which Dr. Dunbar resided. But Dr. Dunbar did not depend upon his practice, as all who are familiar with "Dunbar's Anti-bilious, Anti-rheumatic Panacea" and unfailing "Compound Extract of Blood-Root," warranted to save all undertaker's bills, are aware.

The Bowens were a fair representative of the "middling class," as the tradespeople in England submit to be called, though in this country we resent first and second class carriages, and accept general discomfort and confusion instead. They owned a two-story wooden house on High Street, with green shutters and a door-bell. The wing distinguished it from the Gerrys', which was, in other respects, precisely the same. The wing was only one story, however. It had been Dr. Dunbar's office when that distinguished ornament of the medical profession was a practising physician. The Bowens had altered it when they went into the house, and it had been held sacred from that time as the "spare bed-room." This was a cheerful room in itself, opening so conveniently into the parlor, though it generally had a chilly, damp feeling, from being shut up most of the year, as the Bowens had so few visitors. The sitting-room was also the dining-room and family apartment. Time had been when the meals were taken in the kitchen, and "the hired girl" had her seat at the table with the rest of the household; but Mrs. Bowen's sense of propriety had led her to be among the first of the innovators on this unpleasant custom, which gave you the mingled odors of meat and vegetables, the hissing of the just used frying-pan, or the smoke of the scorched beef-steak, by way of accompaniment to the dinner. So many of the Plumville domestics "grumbled" at the additional steps which this reform occasioned, as well as at "not being considered as

good as anybody," that Hannah, with all her faults, was a desirable "help." For her part, she preferred having her dinner to herself, and nobody around "if her beau should happen to come in a little early." The second story was entirely occupied as sleeping-rooms, Hannah's being in the attic over the kitchen.

All Plumville arranged their houses much after this fashion. They had their "front rooms"—unopened more than once or twice in a month, on the occasion of a solemn tea-drinking or a formal call from the minister—and the spare bed-room was a matter of necessity, a stereotyped appendage to gentility.

"You ain't very well this morning, mother," said Mrs. Bowen, cheerfully, as her mother-in-law came shivering to the table, on a wintry morning, wrapped in a printed woollen shawl, of a style that heralded the plaids.

"As well as I ever expect to be, 'Liza. I ain't nothing but an old cumberer of the ground, and my rheumatiz is worse than ever. 'Pears to me I'd rather go without breakfast 'most than to have to come over them stairs for it."

"I wish you didn't have any stairs. I'm sure I don't believe but what we could have a stove put up in your room this winter, and Kate or Johnny could just as well carry up your meals."

Mrs. Bowen brightened up with the prospect of making "grandmother" more comfortable. Hannah would grumble about another fire, and it would be just so much more expense, to be sure; but she would make the children carry up the wood, and build it herself.

"I dare say you'd like to get rid of me altogether," groaned Mother Bowen. "It's always the way old folks is treated—shoved off, and shoved off, until they're pushed out of sight and sound, and then other people's satisfied. You needn't put yourself out to make no fire for me. I know very well what's under it. I can see sharp enough, if I can't hear so well as some folks."

It was useless to remonstrate against this injustice. Mother Bowen had taken up the idea, years before, that she was in everybody's way, her daughter-in-law's more especially, and every movement was colored by this suspicion.

The weather grew colder, until even Mrs. Bowen shivered in her own room, and thought that, if she envied rich people anything, it was a bed-room fire; and it was actually painful to see the old lady creep about the house, for, of course, every night's exposure to the cold above stairs increased the rheumatism, and she sat nodding in her chair behind the stove afternoons, rather than to make the exertion of going up for her usual after-dinner nap. Mrs. Bowen thought at one time of putting up a bed in the sitting-room. It was not without a precedent in Plumville; many very respectable families did so; but, apart from the inconvenience, it seemed uncleanly, since all their meals were taken there; and, giving that up, Mrs. Bowen wandered off into her front room to consider.

The parlor sofa was always her place of inspiration. Whenever she was worried and disturbed, and wanted to set herself right, Mrs. Bowen had a way of going into the parlor, drawing up one window shade, rubbing a little dust off the centre-table, settling her collar in the large looking-glass, and, then depositing herself in a particular corner, to think it out quietly. It was about all the use she had of the room, as she said to herself that day. It had cost more than all the rest of the house. The carpet, to be sure, was the same they went to housekeeping with—a white ground, with a pattern of lively colors—almost as good as it was the day it was stretched; but the chairs had been renewed, three years before, Mr. Bowen bringing home six mahogany and hair-cloth, with a sofa to match, from New York. He had his own share of pride, and he thought it reflected credit on his business standing to have mahogany furniture in his parlor.

Mrs. Bowen looked towards the spare bed-room door, and wondered whether Hannah had remembered to air the best feather-bed. Yes, aired and made up again, the room looking as tidy and inhospitable as spare bed-rooms usually do. The white half-curtains, with their borders of knitted fringe, were drawn together, the empty pitcher on the wash-stand was covered by a fringed towel, and tissue-paper protected the gilt frame of the mirror. It had not been disturbed since Mrs. Bowen's cousin from New York had paid her summer visit; and as her sister from the country had lately removed to New York, it was not likely that its repose would be broken for some time to come. It was too bad to have a bed-room right there on the first floor, entirely unoccupied, when the stairs were so hard for grand-

mother; yet she could not keep house without a spare bed-room—that was impossible. She never had done so—nobody in Plumville did. Where would company lay off their things? and what could she do if anybody *should* happen to come? So Mrs. Bowen sighed at finding no solution to her difficulty, and drew down the window-blind again.

But it could not shut out the idea of the unfitness of the thing, keeping the best and most comfortable room in the house for a possibility of use, when it was really needed every day; and her journeys thither, to lay the unheeded proposition, threatened to make a diagonal thin place in the parlor carpet.

"I didn't know but we should have to carry mother up to-night," she said, by way of broaching the subject to her husband, one cold December evening. "I had to stay and help undress her, the room was so cold, though she didn't want to let me. I can't bear to think of her dressing in such weather as this without a fire in her room."

"No, nor I. What *are* you going to do about it, Eliza? She's never had the rheumatism so bad before."

"That's it, the cold room; she's so feeble, and it takes her so long. I don't see but one way. If she had the spare bed-room, now, she'd be right on the same floor, and we could put a little stove up."

Mr. Bowen was as much startled as he would have been had his foreman proposed taking the front store for a workshop. "Why, what on earth would you do for company? Where would you put Kate?"

"She could have the big bed in mother's room, and take hers away altogether; she's getting old enough to have a room to herself, anyhow; and then, if company came, I could fix a place for her, somewhere, for a few nights."

"All very fine; but 'taint a going to do. Nobody that is anybody lives without a spare bed-room. Why, what would folks say? They'd think my business was running down right off. Too bad about mother, though; isn't it? Seems to me she gets more feeble every day; she used to be so spry. Well, fix it to suit yourself, I don't know much about such things; but I can't see such a mother as she was wanting anything that's under my roof."

"Specting company, are you, 'Liza? O my, I don't feel a bit like seeing people! Oh, my arm! I believe, if I'd known it, I'd just staid abed to-day; nobody'd a missed me, and I should have been out of folks' way! If 'twan't for those stairs, I'd go right back again. I

don't see what people want to live for, for my part. Dear knows, I never did." And Mother Bowen deposited herself on a parlor chair in the most uncomfortable position she could devise.

"Won't you come in and see how we've got the spare room fixed up?" said Mrs. Bowen, who stood with a tack hammer in her hand, and contemplated her work with evident satisfaction.

"I don't know as I care about it; every step's just so much. Why, you've been getting a rocking-chair and a settee for it, haven't you? My, how comfortable it does look! Why, who do you expect, 'Liza? That rocking-chair looks dreadful like mine, only it's covered different. Got a stove, too. It feels as if there was a fire here."

It did look very comfortable, the freshly made bed, with its neat chintz counterpane and valance, the same pattern as the covers of the chair and stuffed settee. The frame of the looking-glass, and the clean china upon the washstand were shining in the sun. Katy had added her sole treasure, a gilt china vase, to the decoration of the apartment, and an old-fashioned light-stand, dark and rich with age, stood by the side of the rocking-chair, turned half way to the window. But pleasantest of all, on this chilly winter's day, was the genial atmosphere diffused from a neat air-tight stove that, as Hannah remarked, "took up no more room than a band-box, and het up in five minutes."

"You've took my light-stand, I see." And the expression of curiosity and interest, on Mother Bowen's face, gave place to a sharpness that occasionally varied her bemoanings. "I should have thought you might have waited till I was in my grave before you begun; 'tain't likely I'm going to last a great while, anyhow. I sha'n't keep you out of anything much longer; not even my house room."

"But that's just what we don't care about, mother," said Mrs. Bowen, brightly; "we want to keep you with us as long as possible, and I've been fixing up the room to make it as comfortable as I could for you."

"Some folks wouldn't be satisfied if you just lay down and let 'em walk over you," remarked Hannah, tartly. "If a spare room isn't a going to suit 'em, I don't know what is."

"Just come and try your rocking-chair, mother; we put a pound of new feathers into the cushion, and Johnny and Kate made this stool to put your feet on, so you could have the other one in the sitting-room just the same. The parlor rocking-chair is going in there for you, and when you get your bureau in that

corner you'll be as snug as possible. See how far you can look up and down street; I had no idea so many people went by, always being at the back of the house."

"I hain't got a word to say." And Mother Bowen drew out the blue silk pocket-handkerchief she still persisted in using, as the actual meaning of all these proceedings dawned upon her. "I hain't got a single word. I never was so beat in all my life."

Which was the truth; for the jealous suspicion was fairly shaken, if not conquered, with the tremendous sacrifice of the spare chamber to her convenience, unshorn of a single elegance, and embellished by even the best feather bed. No one could have appreciated the self-denial more fully than old Mrs. Bowen, who had been a stirring and notable housewife, priding herself on her quilts, her beds, and keeping the best of everything for company.

"I always used to think Mrs. Bowen was a sensible woman," remarked Mrs. Gerry to Mrs. Toby, who was taking a sociable tea with her; "but the way she's been going on lately! Did you hear that she makes a sittin'-room of her parlor, this winter?"

"You don't say so! Does she let them children come in, too, all hours of the day?"

"So it seems. I guess her furniture'll look well, by spring, don't you? Mary Jane, Mary Jane! Don't you hear me? Come right here, this minute. March out to the kitchen, both of you, and don't let me hear another word to-night! My, how troublesome children are, Mrs. Toby! Just half the time, I can't hear myself think. Yes, ain't it queer about Mrs. Bowen?"

"He's doing first rate, Toby says."

"Well, I s'pose he is; but not a great sight better than his neighbors." And Mrs. Gerry reflected complacently on the recent addition to her husband's lumber yard. "It's a growing place, and 'most everybody's business is doing well."

"Except Toby's, seems to me." And the tired-looking woman sighed. "It does seem to me he has the worst luck."

"You know Mrs. Bowen took her spare bedroom for the old lady, two years ago." Mrs. Gerry was too much absorbed in her theme to play the consoler. "Of course that made more or less tracking over the parlor floor; so, last year, she got a druggert for it, and this year she's found out—there goes Sam. Sam, Sam! Come back and shut the door."

The half-grown boy that had passed through the room a moment before, came back sulkily.

"What do you want?"

"I want you to shut the door after you, and don't go tracking through the house that way. Where's Albert? What were you doing up garret?"

"That's my business," answered the boy, in the same unfilial tone, "as long as I ain't in your way. Al's gone to the Vigilant meeting, and I'm going too. Tell pa Mr. Waterman says he can send in his bill again next week." And a slam of the two doors that lay between the sitting-room and the street announced his departure.

"O dear!" sighed Mrs. Gerry. "I do believe there never was such children as mine. Mary Jane and Sarah's as wild as two hawks, and those boys go to every fire in town. Why, the night Tremper's soap factory burnt down, I never closed my eyes. Both of them there till daylight, and their father gone to Hornellsville. To be sure, I'm thankful to have them out of the house, generally. Your children are all little, Mrs. Toby, and you've no idea what a state such boys keep the house in. Whistling and hammering from morning till night, and whistling and shouting. It's enough to make people distracted. What was I saying about Mrs. Bowen?—oh, using her parlor."

"I don't see how folks can afford to keep so many fires," said Mrs. Toby, edging up a little nearer to the dull stove.

"Oh, that's what made her use the parlor. She finds that big stove heats the sitting-room enough for meals, and keeps the old lady's room comfortable, too, except the coldest of weather. They don't let it go out, day nor night. I don't see what's the matter with our lamp. Just wait a minute, Mrs. Toby; I'll pick it up a little. Seems to me the oil gets worse and worse."

There was no complaint to be made of Mrs. Bowen's lamp, that evening—of either of her lamps, we should have said, for there were two upon the table, reflecting almost as much light as they gave, they were so brightly polished. The table had been rolled in from the sitting-room, and was only cherry, it is true, but it was covered by a large cloth, blue and crimson, that would "wash equal to new." Mrs. Bowen's spool-basket stood near the lamps, and she seemed to enjoy her sewing, as she looked up around the room, and back again to her stitching with renewed industry. A cheerful fire was glowing in the open stove, and Kate, on the other side of the table, was so occupied with her crochet-needle and the printed pattern before her, that she had no time to talk.

Presently, the door from the dining-room to the kitchen "opened hard," and John, a bright-looking boy of twelve, came in boisterously.

"Gently, gently, my son; and what hair! Not fit for the parlor, that's certain, or those hands, either." So the lad disappeared for a time, and came back more quietly, in parlor order.

"Where's my 'Harper'? Kate, have you my 'Harper' again? Mother, Kate always—"

"No, I haven't." And a magazine cover of a very different shade of yellow was exhibited. "I've just got what belongs to me—the 'Lady's Book.'"

"There's your 'Harper' under grandma's 'Observer.' Don't go too fast, John. How about lessons, though?"

"Oh, it's Friday night, and we've got all day to-morrow to learn them."

"Too much time is worse than too little; I used to find that out. I can remember when I went to school."

"Isn't it funny to think mother ever went to school?" said Kate, pausing, with her finger on her place in the tidy receipt.

"Real funny. I guess she always had first rate lessons. Father says she always does everything about right. Well he does, mother! I heard him tell Mr. Gerry so, at the store, when they were talking about taking the magazines."

A glow filled Mrs. Bowen's heart. What can give greater happiness than the confidence of a husband and the fond praises of a child?

"Well, about the lessons. I used to put off mine just that way, and they would be hanging over me all through Saturday, and Sunday, too, for that matter, so that I never really enjoyed anything. Our teacher used to say that she always had worse lessons on Monday than any other day in the week."

"O dear!"—and the crochet-needle was laid down fretfully—"I never shall get this done before Christmas."

"I should think you might just let me finish this one thing." And John went on finding his place in the magazine. "I had to go to bed right in the middle of it, last night. It's all about Robinson Crusoe's island. See! there's pictures of everything."

"You know the agreement," said Mrs. Bowen, quietly; and, after a few more lingering looks, she had the satisfaction of seeing them both subside into their school-books, their attention quickened by the desire to get back to more agreeable employment.

A quiet hour passed. Mrs. Bowen's needle flew along rapidly; the two brown curly heads

bent studiously over the open books; grandmother's distinct breathing, as she fell asleep on the settee in her own room, was distinct in the stillness.

A long, low whistle was heard under the window, presently. Johnny's head came up, and he listened for a moment, then all was still again. Once more the signal sounded, so prolonged that John started and hurried for the door.

"What is it, John?"

A look half eagerness and half annoyance passed over the boy's face. "It's Al Gerry, I expect, mother. He offered to stop for me to-night."

"Ask him in, my son." And Mrs. Bowen went on with her work.

"Where's my cap? I don't believe he'll come in, though."

"No, he says he can't," said John, after a parley at the hall door. "Come in, Al; it's only mother and Kate. I don't believe I can go; I didn't say a word to father about it—I forgot."

"Teaze your mother, then; she'll let you off," whispered the awkward, shamefaced boy. "Come along, if you're coming."

"Ask Alfred if he won't come in and stay here this evening," said Mrs. Bowen, rising and going out into the hall. "Where were you going, boys?"

"Tell her round the corner," whispered the visitor again, slinking as far out of sight as possible, but seeing the bright, cheerful-looking room, nevertheless, and thinking how good the fire looked.

"We were going round to see the new engine, mother, round to the engine-house. They say she's a beauty, and they are going to have crackers and cheese, and things."

"Oh, a treat," said Mrs. Bowen, pleasantly. "Tell Alfred he shall have some nuts and apples, if he'll come in. I think our parlor is a great deal pleasanter than a cold engine-house."

"That's a fact." And John shivered and thrust his hands in his pockets, as the cold wind rushed in. "La, come in, Al; mother won't eat you up, and I'll show you the greatest lot of pictures, all about Robinson Crusoe's Island. I guess I don't care about going, any how"—for there was an enchanting contrast between the cheerful room and the dark, cold street, at that moment.

"You're real mean; you promised," muttered the lad. "Catch me coming round for you again." And he closed the parley by an

abrupt leap off the front steps to the pavement, darting away round the corner.

Good management had spared Mrs. Bowen the necessity of forbidding the expedition, and there was no ill-will between mother and child to cloud the evening.

The lessons were finished, but cracking a dish of nuts in the dining-room had suspended the exploration of Juan Fernandez for the present, and Kate had rubbed the Spitzenbergs until their red cheeks shone invitingly, by the time it was accomplished.

"Now, if father would only come in!" the young handmaiden said, as she brought the plates from the closet. "Don't it look real cozy?"

"I guess Al wishes he'd stayed, by this time." And John helped his mother generously. "I know how it is. The men like to have us boys praise the machine, and 'bet' it will beat the other, and pat us on the back, and say, 'Just see, now, *he* knows! La, the 'Goody' can't begin to come to tea!' And then, after awhile, they get to drinking, and smoking, and telling funny stories—the kind you don't like, you know, mother"—for John did not think it proper to explain any further before his sister.

"I hope the boys go off, then?"

"O no, they don't always; that is, they hang around and hang around, and get a drink, and the ends of the cigars. I know."

It was rather an indiscreet revelation for Master John, providing that he had not renounced the engine-house altogether.

"I think Al Gerry's real hateful," said Kate. "There's grandma awake; here, let me hide my tidy, mother, or she'll find out it's for her. Never mind, I know my lessons now, and I can work a whole hour on it to-morrow. Here's your chair, grandma." And she helped to install Mother Bowen in the parlor rocking-chair with much more alacrity than she would once have shown in her service. But "grandma" had come out wonderfully in the last two years; bodily comfort had softened the repining, discontented spirit; and their mother's constant example of attention to her wants had gone much further than precept.

"What d'ye say about them Gerrys?" inquired the old lady, in rather an elevated tone of voice. "I heard you say something or 'nother about them, hey?"

"I said I thought Al Gerry was real hateful. Well, he is, mother; you ought to see how he teazes us the minute we begin to play nicely.

I wish I didn't have to go with the Gerry girls, anyhow; I don't like 'em."

"Why?" said Mother Bowen; "they're as good as you be."

"No, they ain't," said Kate, stoutly. "They never know their lessons, and they're always running and racing through the street; ain't they, John?"

John was too much occupied for words, but he gave a decided nod in the affirmative.

"Their clothes is good enough"—and grandma drew forth the blue handkerchief. "Better'n yours. I saw 'em last Sunday going home from church; they had on silk frocks, and their ma had one, too, that I never saw afore, and a muff. Why don't you dress Kate more, 'Liza? She's getting to be a pretty big girl; folks won't care about going with her."

"That wouldn't hurt my feelings, mother, not one bit. I don't care about her going out much. Lucy Allen comes here more than she goes anywhere, I guess, and our minister's daughter is good company enough. I wonder who's with father; here he comes, talking to some one. Kate, get a chair; Johnny, open the door, so your father can see."

"My, how comfortable you do look!" And Mr. Gerry, who loved his ease, stepped in, in advance of his host, rubbing his hands, and pausing a little as the bright light met his eyes. "I wasn't going to come in at first; I thought you must be having company, it looked so light in here. You don't go in for economy, do you, Mrs. Bowen?" And though he enjoyed his neighbor's luxurious living, he thought it was "lucky" he had such a careful, saving wife at home. Such a fire, and two lights every night, would soon "eat a hole," as he expressed it, into the year's accumulations.

"We go in for being comfortable." And Mr. Bowen, who was now a pretty thorough convert to his wife's heretical doctrines, drew off his boots in the hall, and set his feet into the slippers Kate brought to him. "Slippers and all, you see"—and he held up one foot and then the other. "My little girl did those, every stitch—didn't you, Katie?—out of that 'Lady's Book,' or whatever that comes with Johnny's 'Harper.' Well, Johnny, how about Robinson Crusoe?"

"Well, some folks saves, and some folks spends," said Mr. Gerry, helping himself to a Spitzenberg, and attacking it without knife or plate. "I feel it my duty to lay up for *my children*. That's the good old way, isn't it, Mrs. Bowen?"

"That's what his father and I did"—and

the old lady sat up straighter with the reflection. "Don't no where he'd have got his start, if we hadn't."

"True enough, mother; but it is not necessary for me to be quite so saving, you know, because I had the start. I can afford to live different, and times are better."

"Don't you think, Mr. Gerry," said Mrs. Bowen, picturing poor Al in the smoky engine-house, exposed to moral contagion, "it's just as well to spend a little to teach children how to make a good use of what they will have."

"I hav'n't got no pride about me, I believe. What was good enough for me is good enough for my children. Common school education, and good figuring, that's about all they want." Mr. Gerry began to think it was his duty to bring his old neighbors down a peg or two, they were getting so set up. "If you want to make your children *genteel*, you're doing it."

"No, that isn't the word, exactly. I want to bring them up so that they'll never be ashamed, no matter what company they are in; and encouraging them to read and find out about the world, and what's going on in it, is one way to help it along."

"Give 'em plenty of money, and they'll get along fast enough! Hickory nuts are high this year, ain't they? That'll do, Johnny; but you seem to have about all that's going. Now, to be real candid, Mrs. Bowen, don't you think you could get along with one light, and just half that fire? My wife would." And, unaware of the real impertinence of the speech, Mr. Gerry looked around triumphantly.

"How are Mrs. Gerry's eyes?" inquired Mrs. Bowen, so gravely, that her husband looked up from his nuts to see if she had understood the implication of wastefulness. "I heard they troubled her again."

"Well, they do, considerably. The doctor says she's strained them somehow, and she mustn't use them much. She's had to hire a good deal of sewing this fall, and it's put her out, for she likes to save about as well as I do."

"I always told Mrs. Gerry she sewed with too little light, evenings; I strained my eyes that way myself, when I was a girl and lived with Aunt Peck. Oh! Couldn't I get along with one lamp? Wasn't that what you asked me? I don't think I could, sewing on John's clothes; black work at night is so bad for the eyes."

"Well, I guess I must be going. How well your ma looks. Hav'n't had so much rheumatism this year, have you, Mrs. Bowen?"

The old lady nodded her head sagaciously.

She had been trying very hard to keep up with the conversation, but only a word now and then had reached her.

"No, I'm as spry as a young girl, now. The house is so warm all over, we don't none of us ketch cold. Hain't had a doctor inside of it all winter, have we, 'Liza? It's a wonderful stove for giving out heat; and, keeping all the doors open, we don't have but this one fire out of the kitchen."

"Oh, sit down now; don't be going just yet," said Mr. Bowen, as his friend made a decided move for his hat. "It's early, only just half past nine."

"Yes, I believe I must be going; Mrs. Toby's at our house to tea, and I'll have to walk home with her, as her husband's gone to New York. Them boys of mine is never to be found of an evening."

Mother Bowen glided peacefully down the quiet current of her sheltered life, and fell asleep at last in the pleasant room, which she had come to call "The Chamber of Peace." It was a spare bed-room once more; but it was brightened forever after by the recollection of her grateful acknowledgment, at the last, of the many cares and attentions she had been surrounded with.

Mr. and Mrs. Bowen liked quiet now, when evening came, and established themselves more frequently in the sitting-room, leaving the parlor to the young people. Lucy Allen, the minister's daughter, came in very often, for she was engaged to John, and they were to be married as soon as his first year's partnership with his father had expired. All the young people liked to come to Mrs. Bowen's, and to borrow the new books and magazines they were sure to find there, and, at the Sewing Society, Kate was the one appealed to in any discussion about plain as well as fancy work. Her own work-basket was pretty full, too, for there were whole pieces of cotton and linen cut out and piled away in the empty drawers of the spare bed-room. Young Dunbar's saddle horse, and dogs, and flute had been brought into requisition for Miss Kate's service uselessly, to the great wonder and envy of Miss Green, the lawyer's daughter, who would have said "Yes," with half the besieging, to so many thousands a year. Kate had said "Yes" to a much poorer man, and probably never would ride in her own carriage, but her father and mother were satisfied. Mr. Allen said he had a noble head and heart, and as to family, it was all that could be asked.

Mrs. Gerry came over to see if it could really be true, when she heard that Kate was engaged to "that young Arnold, who was boarding with his mother at the Plumville House, last summer."

"Mary Jane heard it at the dressmaker's, last night," said Mrs. Gerry, "and I put on my bonnet the first thing this morning, and run right over. It didn't seem possible. Why, I heard his mother only just had enough to live on, and he hadn't got fairly started yet."

"Mr. Bowen thought he might as well give them a start as to have all the wear and worry of a long engagement. We sha'n't need a great deal ourselves, with John married and Katie gone, so her father thought she might as well have part of what was coming now."

"Well, well, I only hope it'll turn out all right"—and Mrs. Gerry drew a long sigh; "but my experience ain't very encouraging. It seems to me that we haven't had anything but trouble since the children began to grow up, after all our working, and working, and slaving for them. There's Sam—you know how he went off, because his father wouldn't take money right out and out, and set him up in business—I don't suppose we shall ever see *him* again; and Al doesn't seem to get along very well, somehow, I don't know why."

Mrs. Bowen knew, and all Plumville knew, that his idle, dissipated habits were what returned him a burden on his father from everything he attempted to do; but she thought silence the truest sympathy on this point of her old friend's domestic troubles.

"Besides all we have to do for Sarah and her husband. She *would have him*, you know—you might as well try to stop the ocean—and there she is, with poor health and two little children, and he off speering round the country half the time."

"You have Mary Jane, though," Mrs. Bowen said as pleasantly as she could, for it seemed very hard to have nothing bright to turn to, with all Mrs. Gerry's lifelong self-denial and hard work.

"Yes, but she ain't much help. All she cares about is being dressed up and parading the streets. Why, that silk dress of hers and velvet cloak cost more than fifty dollars! Just think of it! when I wore my brown merino eight winters, and it only cost me ten dollars to begin with, fringe and all! She doesn't seem to get invited round much, though; I don't see how in the world it is. Some folks' children seem to turn out well, and some don't. It's all luck, anyhow."

She could not see, poor soul, but her shut-up parlor and empty guest-room were daily witnesses against her, though they still preserved the faded remnant of their ancient splendors, and Mrs. Bowen's had been refurnished years before.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

MY SERENADE.

B Y C. D.

"My dear child," said a maiden lady of an uncertain age, "you need not blush so; I dare say the young gentleman who has just passed the window has no idea of your existence."

"But he comes past every day."

"Well, what of that?"

"But he looks in at the window."

"Ah, indeed!"

"And he wears a sprig of myrtle in his coat, and you know that means true."

"Really, you amuse me! Anything more?"

"No, aunt."

"Then, my dear child, you are a bit of a goose, and ought to know better. I am afraid you are too fond of reading idle tales when you might be better employed. Well, well, I suppose we cannot put an old head on young shoulders, and yours are very young yet;" and she might have added pretty ones, covered as they were with locks of the softest and richest brown hair in the world. Pretty girls are so common that I need not describe the one whom the reader has overheard, as she and her aunt were sitting before the fire in that magic hour when the glare of day has passed and night not wholly come; when tenderness touches the hardest heart; when life seems more ideal, less dark, and cold, and dull.

"Shall I tell you what happened to myself, Rose?"

"Yes, do, aunt."

"Well, I will; you will see that there was once a time when your old aunt was as silly as yourself."

Rose laid her beautiful face on her aunt's lap, and looked up.

Her aunt began:—

"Miss Selina Silkstone kept a select establishment at a watering-place for a limited number of young ladies, genteelly brought up, and from whom the most unexceptionable references were required. She frequently advertised in the *North American*, and always had a vacancy for one or two. But you know as well as I that there never yet was a lady who kept a school for a limited number, that had not a vacancy for a genteel and well-connected pupil. I was that, and more. Why, then, did I seek Miss Silkstone's classic abode? Well, the truth

is, Dr. Bluepill, our family physician, hinted that a little change of air and an occasional bath in the sea would not be amiss. 'The system requires bracing, ma'am,' said he to my mamma. 'We are getting,' said he—the dear, fat old man, as he contemplated my growing figure—'a little pale and thin; our roses are not quite so red as they might be.' Girl as I was, I had read Lord Byron's 'Pirate,' and his lines in 'Childe Harold' bidding the deep and dark-blue ocean roll on, and had by heart Barry Cornwall's songs, and loved, as girls of seventeen do love, passionately,

'The sea, the sea, the open sea;
The ever fresh, the ever free;'

and made no objection to the arrangement which for awhile transplanted me from the paternal roof. It was not reluctantly, then, that I journeyed to the scene of my future residence. I was not bad-looking, and I knew that I had a love of a bonnet which would set all the girls wild. I had not lived in a genteel neighborhood for nothing, you may be sure.

"Arrived at school, I did as the rest. On Sunday we went to church. Now the church service is rather long; and, however pious and proper one may be disposed to be, one cannot be always looking at the parson or the prayer-book. In one of my occasional peeps at the congregation, I found the eyes of a young man intently fixed on me. It was evident to me and all the rest of the girls that his ardent gaze was directed to no other than myself. The next Sunday the same phenomenon was witnessed; the next, it was the same. I was pleased, yet annoyed. Miss Silkstone gave me many a private lecture in her own apartments; the French mademoiselle was delighted; the girls all laughed; and, to make assurance doubly sure, I had been informed that one of the maids connected with the establishment had been asked by a gentleman the name of the new girl, whom he declared to be a 'stunner.' Now, it was clear to me and all the rest of us that this inquiry could have come from no other than from the gentleman whose optics had been so regularly, and, as it seemed, irresistibly exercised on myself. Presently, another symptom of his admiration was mani-

fested. Every evening at a certain hour, under a wall at the end of a garden, were heard the dulcet sounds of an accordion; all said it was my church admirer thus renewing on week-days the homage that he had offered me at church on Sundays. I thought what every one said must be true, and listened with peculiar pleasure to 'Annie Laurie,' and 'Mary Blane,' and 'Jeannette and Jeannot,' and 'I Dreamt that I Dwelt in Marble Halls,' and other popular airs; all of which I had heard, it is true, played before, but never, so it seemed to me, with such pathos and power as under the present circumstances. What a delicate way of being courted! Of course I was not in love; but, woman-like, I was glad to think that some one was in love with me. Just at this time I had to leave school for a few days; at the same time, by a strange coincidence, the serenading ceased, and my admirer was absent from the pew in church. Surely, then, I was right in thinking that I was the object of all these delicate attentions. The more I thought about it, the more certain I felt. Suspicion was banished; doubt now gave place to confidence. The mystery was cleared up—the serenade was for me, and the serenader was he whom I had seen at church. I must say, when I had come to this conclusion, I became impatient of this serenading, and wished either to change it into something of a more satisfactory character, or to cease altogether. The French mademoiselle and myself, without saying a word to the other girls, resolved to bring matters to a crisis. For this purpose we resolved to secure the first opportunity; nor was it long before one presented itself. One dark night, when the usual serenading was going on, and Miss Silkstone happened to be particularly engaged with the friends of a new pupil, who had come that afternoon to tea, we hastily put on an old shawl and bonnet apiece; slipped out of the house forthwith, quite unperceived; rushed down into the garden, and, somehow or other, found our way to the top of the wall. The night, as I have said, was dark; we could see no one, and the unknown was vigorously going through his accustomed musical performance. I fancied I could see the graceful outline of my admirer, as he swept his fingers over his beloved instrument, and told to the cold, dark night, and the sad and silent stars, all the love, and hope, and purpose of his heart. I listened with an interest that thrilled my whole frame. There he was, languishing for me, dreaming that I was smiling on his love; I—I was, there could be no doubt about that, the Annie Laurie for whom he would lay him down and die!

What was I to do? Did not such touching love deserve some graceful recognition? Was he to realize the mournful fate of which he sang? Was I, so young, to be a cruel murderer, and all through life to have my heart bowed down with a sense of the fearful burden of such a crime! Yet, would it not be imprudent to address a gentleman to whom I had never been introduced? I was in a frightful state of agitation; I could feel my cheeks getting red, and my heart jumped right up to the top of my throat. What should I do?

"Why, speak to him, of course," said the governess, who was getting very cold, 'or he will be laid up with influenza for a month.'

"O dear," said I, 'I wish he would not come playing here!'

"O nonsense! Speak to him; it will be capital fun.'

"No, no; anything but that," exclaimed I, in an agony of fear.

"Well, if you won't speak, send him a token.'

"A token?" Ah! that was a capital idea! There could be no harm in that. He was just beneath me. I gathered a few leaves and let them fall.

"Hush!" said the governess.

The accordion went on as usual. The leaves evidently had produced no effect.

"Try again," said she.

"I did so. We listened—no acknowledgment. The accordion went on vigorously as ever.

"Let us go," said I, not a little frightened.

"No, no; try again.'

"I did so. The music stopped, the serenader changed his position; but in a moment recommenced his amorous strain. I grew quite frightened.

"Oh, do let us go!" I whispered.

"No, no; try once more.'

Again fell the leaves, again we listened, again the accordion ceased. There was a cough, then a pause, then another cough, as if the serenader was impatient, and expected to be addressed. We strained our eyes, and just saw the dim outline of a figure.

"Come! none of that 'ere!" was his exclamation.

"I could scarce believe my ears. My refined lover indulging in such vulgar and commonplace language! I scarce knew whether to laugh or cry; I did neither, but said, as calmly as my excited feelings would allow me:—

"What did you say?"

"Why, none of that 'ere, to be sure!

Pitching lots of rubbige on to a poor fellow. What do you mean ?

“ There was some terrible mistake. My friend came to my rescue. Summoning up her dignity, and peering over the wall, she said severely :—

“ ‘ Young man, who are you ?’

“ ‘ Me, marm ? why, the butcher’s boy, to be sure !’

“ ‘ Oh, indeed ! And what do you here ?’

“ ‘ Vy, you see, I hain’t no place at home to practise in, so I comes every night here, ’cause the wall keeps the wind off ; and now it ’s time for me to be off.’

“ And away he went off whistling, leaving

me disenohanted of my love. I may only add that I endured an additional pang when, a short while afterward, I found that the eyes that always glared at me at church squinted. Since then I have not been quite so hasty in jumping at conclusions.

“ And now, my little girl, we had better get to work ; ring for lights, and draw the curtains.”

Rose got up to do so. As she did, the individual with the myrtle passed. Rose thought nothing of it, and it is well she did not, as later in life she knew him well as a married man and a friend of her husband and her own.

MY WIFE, AND WHERE I FOUND HER.

BY VIRGINIA F. TOWNSEND

I LAID down my pen at last, and looked out of the window by which I had been writing assiduously for the last three hours—writing business letters to my lawyer in New York and my agents at the West, for I was now a business man, and a rich one—richer than I expected, when the news came, a month before, that my uncle, the wealthy old banker, had fallen into a sudden fit of apoplexy, and died in less than twenty-four hours later, leaving me, his only surviving relative, the heir to all that wealth which it had been the one aim of his life to heap up, for which he had hardened his heart, and contracted and debased the best part of his nature, and probably bartered his soul, for was he not gone now where, on all lives dedicated to “making money,” is written “Failure,” total, irretrievable? I thought of all this as I looked out of the window, that June morning, and saw the wide reach of fields and pasture-grounds, locked in by the hills, standing afar off in solemn witness. It was a delicious scene, fitly inaugurated by that most serene and beautiful day. Through the dark meadows, on one side, a small brook set its gray inserting, and soft winds shuddered through the rye and wheat fields, which were well nigh “ripe for the harvest.” I had come here two days before, because my nerves had given me unmistakable premonitions that they must have some relaxation after a month’s intense labor, which had kept them up to the extremest point of tension.

It was a little country village, in the southern part of Massachusetts, and I had selected one of the back chambers of the solitary hotel which it boasted, because of this view which opened from its side window. I was thirty-two that month, and, leaning back in my chair,

and looking out of the window, I gathered up the years of my life, and looked at them. I had had, on the whole, a happy childhood, and a glad, brave, struggling youth. My mother was a widow, and I was her only son. She was a *true woman*! I, her son, reverencing her memory, holding in my innermost soul every thought and association of her as something lovely and holy, beyond all price or naming, can think of no praise nor utterance which so completely and perfectly recognizes her character and life. She taught school, and sent me through college and my profession. Then her health failed her. Thank God, she never suffered. I had strength and courage to save her from this, but I could never defray her expenses on that journey which the doctors said would alone save her life. And to think that a few hundreds of all the thousands which I possessed then would have done this six years before, and that I might have had her with me that summer morning, her pale, sweet face, her gentle, low-keyed voice— I put the thought away quickly, for it made something rise in my heart which was like a curse on the dead. Once I had put down my pride for *her* sake, and solicited the loan of a few hundred dollars from my uncle, and I did this in the name of his dead brother and for the life of my mother, and he refused me—he, wifeless, childless, and so rich, and we his only relatives on earth! Oh, into what rocks and stones this greed of gold hardens the souls of men! Well, they have met now, and God be judge betwixt them.

I was twenty-six when my mother died. She stood, for me, as the type and representative of all women. For her sake, I had unbounded faith in all, though I had never known one intimately. Of an artful, selfish, designing

woman I had not the slightest conception, but I held all to be as pure in heart, as lovely in character, as noble, as true, as self-sacrificing as—my mother.

In less than a year after she died, I met HER. She was the sister of one of my classmates, and to wonderful beauty of person she united that grace of movement, that rare fascination and vivacity of expression which make a woman so great a favorite with men. Larger acquaintance with the sex has since convinced me that this style of temperament and character is most frequently associated with lax principles and impulsive, but shallow feeling, and that such women seldom fill up their lives with true, and high, and noble purposes, and that their beautiful impulses seldom condense into those fixed religious principles without which all lives are mistakes and failures. Well, I worshipped Helen James. For two years there was no altitude of moral grace and loveliness to which I did not exalt my idol. I must tell the story briefly. We had been engaged for more than a year when I began to have glimpses of her real character, of the petty social ambition, the selfish motives, the fitful impulses, and desire for admiration which governed it. Yet she loved me. All the best impulses of her nature, all the romance of her youth responded to me, and as there were in her the elements of a rarely noble character, so there was a strong struggle betwixt the good and the evil in that girl's soul. My faith died out slowly—a death of such terrible pain, and struggle, and agony as, it seemed to me, must totally wreck my manhood. She vibrated a long time betwixt him and me—that distant cousin of hers, who had made a sudden fortune in California, and returned, and became enamored of her, as few men could help being—few men, I mean, whose souls did not so recognize and reverence spiritual beauty that no outward adorning of grace and loveliness could atone for the want of it. I saw how, day by day, worldly counsels and ambitions gained strength with her; how she descended to petty prevarication and injustice; how, one by one, moral barriers gave way before admiration and flattery, until I felt that she could never be, in spirit and in heart, my wife, and at last I said to her: "Go, and marry, Helen James, this man who has bought you, and to whom you have sold yourself, and I shall never look upon you again till we stand face to face before the God who is to judge us." And I went out from her presence—that fair, false woman's—and down to the river-bank, and my faith was

lost, and one thought only saved me from the sin and the shame of suicide—it was the memory of my mother.

So, as I said, my thoughts gathered up all these years, as I sat, a man saddened and disciplined by the experience of life, at my chamber window, that summer morning, gloriously adorned of God, and set in a golden arabesque in the heart of June. I wondered what I should do with all this wealth which had fallen to me suddenly, as in some of those old fairy legends I could remember reading at my mother's knee away up in the early child-mornings, and I said to myself, "What shall I do with all this wealth, I wonder? I have lived long enough to know the want and the worth of money, all its limitations, all it can and cannot do for man." And then I made some plans for the future, and devised various ways of doing good and of blessing others with this wealth, and then I sighed, thinking there was no one in the wide world who, loving me supremely and entirely, would rejoice in this fortune which had fallen to me, who would sympathize in and stimulate my aims to bless others with it, and whom I could gather up close to my heart, and shelter the fair head there, knowing that it was the only sweet rest for it in the world, and I felt at that moment I would gladly give up all my newly-gained wealth for such an one to love, and to so love me, to trust in with faith, perfect, absolute; and then I remembered my lost faith in woman, and once I groaned out heavily over it.

I cannot tell just when I caught the first sight of her. I had done this, probably, some time before I was conscious of it. She was a long distance off, for a pasture lot and a field of corn lay betwixt us, but I could see her movements distinctly, and that her figure was small and slender; and my attention would have been attracted to her, if there had been any other human being in sight, or if my eyes had not gone wandering after my thoughts. She was washing under the great apple-tree back of the little yellow story-and-a-half cottage. I could see the old bench, and the tub placed on it, and how the small figure bent over the board, and how she rinsed the clothes, and flung them into the basket on one side; and once I saw her pause, and press her hand quickly to her side, as though the work wearied her. Her face was too distant for me to form the slightest opinion of it or of the girl's appearance, but I took a quiet satisfaction in watching her, as she stood there in the deep shadows of that old gnarled apple-tree, where the robins must have built

their nests for a century, and then went on an under-current of thoughts in my mind, somewhat after this fashion.

"You add something fitting and pleasant to the picture, little woman, off there, doing your work so industriously over that wash-tub, with your heart full of the new birth of purity and beauty which is to come up from your toiling and those snowy suds, which I used to be so fond of blowing into bubbles filled with rainbows fair and frail as the rainbows of my youth. I wonder how wide a horizon of thought and feeling you have, little woman, toiling so steadily over that wash-tub, and if you're the happy wife of some tall, raw-boned farmer, who has to bend his head every time he enters the door of that little old-fashioned cottage of yours, which, most likely, remembers in its silence the summers of the Revolution. You look young and slender, viewed from this distance. Perhaps, after all, you're a young girl who hires out in harvest, and works in the factory winters, with your little hopes, and vanities, and ambitions! Well, keep to your work, none the wiser for my impertinent curiosity; and if I do mine in life half as well as you seem to be doing that washing, I shall be a better man than I am sitting here."

I saw her take up the basket of rinsed clothes, and spread them carefully on the line, and secure them by a pole fastened in the centre of the rope, and then she went into the house, just as the bell summoned me to dinner.

"Is Mr. Grayson in, this evening?"

It was a voice sweet, penetrating, and refined—a voice which I knew at once must belong to a lady. I was in the back parlor of the hotel, when I heard the strange, soft tones syllable my name.

"Yes, ma'am," answered the waiter; "he's up in his room. Shall I call him?"

I was on the point of stepping forward and announcing myself, but the next words, hasty and a little agitated, arrested me.

"O no, there is no necessity. I have brought home the gentleman's clothes. There are just two dozen, and if you will be so good as to take them to his room, he can settle with you."

I was so overwhelmed with amazement that I stood still just where I had risen up from the lounge, with the paper fallen at my feet, until the servant had gone up to my room. But as soon as I recovered myself, I entered the parlor, and confronted the person who had inquired for me, which I did with a good deal of reluctance, as she evidently did not desire an

interview; but the waiter would be certain to discover my retreat, as soon as he ascertained I was not in my own apartment.

She turned her head as I entered, for she was gazing out of the window, and I looked for the first time upon *her* face—the face of the woman who had followed me, dim and vaguely defined, through all the years of my youth up into my manhood, coming before me in dreams and in certain strains of sweet music, coming in its vesture of shining, snowy clouds, and then vanishing away. It was a delicate oval face, neither pretty nor handsome, and only beautiful when the spirit within rose up, and lighted, and filled, and enriched it. It was a face refined, suggestive, womanly, with rapid changes and reflections, with brown, deep, shy eyes, and hair whose color suited the eyes, with prominent, but delicate features, and a mouth that was what all true women's mouths should be—a sweet and perfect mirror of the soul. I drank all this in with that *one* gaze which I had of her, as she turned her face, a little startled, towards me, when I entered the room. My look must have embarrassed her, for a faint fluttering of color into her cheeks first roused me to a consciousness of my rudeness.

"Excuse me, ma'am, but I heard you inquiring for Mr. Grayson."

"Yes, sir, I gave my message to the waiter." And it was no flutter of a blush now, but a burning tide of crimson which flooded her cheeks. She looked down, and I knew what a struggle was going on in that girl's soul. There was a quick flash of pain on the forehead, and a sudden compression of the lips; then she looked up in my face steadily, and said, in her soft, quiet tones: "I have just brought home your clothes, sir."

The brave little woman! the real, genuine, fine-grained lady! It was her turn to exult now, for I was more embarrassed than she.

"I—I was not aware that you—" I broke down utterly here, and I am not usually a bashful man, and I am certain that my nerves would not have been in the least disconcerted before an empress and her suite.

She saw my embarrassment, and comprehended it. I knew that by the look of grateful recognition which flashed up in her eyes.

"I applied, last week, for the work, and the agreement was that I should return the clothes."

She spoke with a quiet dignity, which said, plainer than any words, "It is honest work, and I am not ashamed of it any longer; and if you think the less of me for doing it, the disgrace is yours, not mine."

I knew on what ground I was standing now, and I drew out my purse.

"There were two dozen, I believe?"

"Yes; the whole amounts to one dollar"—as quiet and self-sustained as though I was a drygoods clerk and she was my customer.

"I pay that for a single dozen in the city." And I placed a two-dollar note in her hand, and wished it were a thousand, though I should no more have dared offered her this than I would a princess.

"But we don't have such prices in the country"—fluttering the note in her fingers, which I saw were slender and small jointed.

"Well, the work is no easier in the country, and I never pay less."

She thanked me with her eyes, and rose up. I went to the door, and opened it for her. Just as she had got outside, she lifted up her face, that young, earnest, trustful face, to mine, and said—

"Mr. Grayson, if you have any more washing, I shall like to do it for you."

She had triumphed over all shame, all false or natural pride. I knew it now, for there was no flutter in her cheeks or in her voice; the latter was low, and sweet, and steady.

"Thank you; I will send you up some tomorrow."

I had determined to leave the next morning, but my plans underwent a sudden reversion. I watched her as she went down the road, and noticed her dress and figure for the first time. There was a singular fitness about both. She wore a lawn dress scattered with small brown sprigs, and a brown straw bonnet with a green ribbon gathered across it. She was small and delicately moulded, and her walk was rapid and graceful, not elegant.

She had just passed out of my sight, and I was watching the twilight which lay on the distant hills, as God's love overlies our humanity, when the waiter returned. He was surprised to find me alone in the parlor, but I explained my interview with the lady, and learned, through him, that she had resided with her aunt, an infirm old lady, for the last year, that she had come from the city, and taught the district school until it was broken up by the new academy, and he had been greatly surprised, the week before, at her application for the washing of any strangers who might be visiting at the hotel. He was disposed to befriend her, because his sister had attended her school. "And she's a lady, to be sure," he added, "though it's a dreadful come-down to take in washing."

She was a lady; therefore the "coming down" hadn't hurt her, I thought to myself, as I inquired her name.

"Miss Janet Mathews, sir. She lives in the little yellow house jest at the corner of Moss Lane. You may have seen it from your side window."

She was the heroine of my wash-tub!

"Oh, sir, I beg that you will excuse me."

"There is no need of it. You have grazed your arm." And I pointed to the delicate flesh scratched and frayed by the edge of the bar.

"That is no matter, but I might have broken it, if you had not caught me."

It was late in the afternoon, more than a week subsequent to my first meeting with Janet Mathews, that I came suddenly upon her at the corner of a field which opened out of a little belt of woods not far from her home. An apple-tree, its branches laden with small, yellow early apples, grew close to the bars of the fence, and she had mounted on top of these in quest of some of the fruit; but she had only a very precarious foothold, and had lost her equilibrium, and would have fallen to the ground, had I not suddenly arrested her descent. I filled her small work-basket with the apples, which she was in hopes "Aunt Minerva, who was an invalid, might relish."

"No, I will carry them for you," as she put out her hand for the basket, with many thanks for my kindness. "I am very fortunate in having your company for the rest of the walk."

"You were, Mr. Grayson?" with a quick upleap of the shy brown eyes; and then I read the next thought which struck her—that I had called about the washing.

"I am an abrupt sort of man, Miss Mathews, and I will explain my errand at once. I have a friend and college classmate, from whom I yesterday received a letter informing me that he wished to obtain a teacher for the English department in the seminary of which he is principal. This is a rare opportunity for one who is disposed to accept it, as the school is located a few miles from New York, in the midst of most delicious scenery. My friend, his wife, and their half dozen teachers form a company of highly-cultivated Christian people, such as one is not often thrown amongst. The salary for the nine months is five hundred dollars. It struck me that the situation might please you—at least, there could be no harm in offering it to you."

"Oh, Mr. Grayson, how can I thank you?" She broke down here, and I let her cry softly.

I had, three weeks before, visited my classmate for a day, and heard himself and his wife discuss the probability of a vacancy's occurring in the English department of their school. I was revolving in my mind some method in which I might serve my little heroine of the wash-tub, when this conversation recurred to my mind, and I wrote to my classmate immediately. He was under some obligations to me, and there was no difficulty in procuring the situation for Janet Mathews.

We had reached the gate of the little yellow cottage before she spoke again. "Will you come in?" And I knew that she desired it.

It was a little old-fashioned parlor, corresponding with the exterior of the house, into which she ushered me. A dark ingrain carpet, a few chairs, a lounge, and a table strewn with books were the chief features of the parlor furniture. We sat down here together, and talked just as if we were old friends. I learned her history in a few words. Her father had been a merchant, and the sudden discovery of his failure and business ruin through the rascality of his partner had occasioned his death. Janet was his only child, tenderly beloved and cared for, especially so because she was the image of the mother whom she could not remember. The young girl was left entirely dependent on her own resources. She had come to her father's only surviving sister, whose husband had died a few years before, leaving her in declining health, with nothing but the little yellow-brown homestead which had sheltered his boyhood. I knew the rest of the story—how her aunt had gradually become a confirmed invalid, how the academy had absorbed her school, until, with poverty, well nigh starvation, staring them in the face, Janet had applied to the hotel for some washing. All this she told me, that summer afternoon, sitting in that small parlor, with her sweet, earnest face looking up to mine, till the longing and the yearning to gather it up close to my heart was almost more than I could bear. O Janet! Janet!

"And you are pleased with this situation, and I may write to my friend that you will accept it?"

"I did not suppose that the future held anything so good in store for me; and now I can hire a girl to remain with Aunt Minerva, and go out into new life and work."

She said this more to herself than to me, with her hands lying in her lap, and her slender, small-jointed fingers fluttering in and out amongst each other, like young birds trying their wings for the first time.

"The term does not commence until the first of September, so you have more than two months of leisure on your hands, during which I should like to engage your services."

"As your washerwoman, Mr. Grayson? I thought that I was duly installed in that position." And a laugh ran out of her eyes and gleamed about her lips, showing me what springs of light and gladness there were in her nature.

"But I wish, with your permission, to change it. You have studied French?"

"Yes."

"And I do not even read it. Will you consent to take me for your pupil, twice a week, during the next two months?"

She hesitated and blushed, and an inward smile made a kind of flickering light and sweetness about her lips. But it was all satisfactorily settled before I left, and I was Janet Mathews's pupil after this—not simply in French, though, for I think we did not make very rapid progress in this, but I was her pupil in all that vast kingdom of emotions and intuitions of feeling and affections where woman's strength and glory lie, and where man's pride must ever learn of her humility. And so I came, unsaddled and reverent, before the threshold of a true woman's soul, and, day after day, new springs flew back, and I walked under stately arches, and through graceful corridors, and among trees hanging thick with gold and purple fruits, until I began to have some conception of the true measure and stature of perfected womanhood. Oh, Janet, my little cottage girl, Janet Mathews! She had no idea of all she was doing for me during those long summer days, which are like great censers hung up in my memory, and sending their fragrance over all the years.

We had frequent rides and rambles into the woods, and here, sitting under the shadows of the forest trees, or near some little stream, whose crystal skeins were tangled and frayed by the stones over which they wound, Janet Mathews and I talked together. I see her now, her sunbonnet on her lap, and her restless fingers at play with the strings, while that fair, pale, wistful face is looking up to mine, bright or tender, reverent or sad as was the topic we conversed on; for we talked on every conceivable subject, from the scenery about us, the glimmer of sunshine, or the flutter of a bird's wing, and of the world, and the great and solemn problems which underlie all destinies, of life and death, of things present and things to come, and of God, in whose knowledge and

love all things shall be made plain and perfected. But she was not always grave—my little country girl. There were quick currents of gladness and mirth in her nature, which flashed out more and more as her life took on fairer hues, and her low, running laugh would bubble over her lips, and the echoes among the hills would catch it up and toss it back and forth as though they loved it. She was full of quick impulses, but these had become living principles, and her character rested on a solid foundation of truth—truth in word, in action, in heart. She was not perfect, but her life was nourished from the fountain of all perfectness—Janet was a Christian in heart and life.

It was an afternoon, among the last of the summer, when I walked into the sitting-room of the cottage in the lane. There was no need that I should rap, for Janet had caught sight of me at the open door, and two arch little dimples, imbedded in either cheek, revealed themselves, as she welcomed me in her quiet, ladylike way.

"You see, Mr. Grayson, auntie has taken a notion that she will try her hand at some knitting, she's so improved of late, and I'm winding the yarn, under her inspection."

How pretty she looked, standing there, in her neatly fitting blue muslin dress, a new one, which harmonized with her delicate complexion, winding the skein of blue woollen yarn which she had slipped over the backs of a couple of chairs. Her aunt sat in one corner—a drooping, mild-faced little woman, but thin and faded by care and illness. So I sat down in the chintz-cushioned arm-chair, and chatted with both the women, and watched the ball, as it grew in size and comeliness under those slender fingers, and the wind stirred the quince-tree at the window, and the sunshine laughed along the corners of the low ceiling, just as it had laughed a century before, and the yarn ran in a swift blue current over Janet's fingers.

At last, I said to her: "See here, my child, you will grow fatigued, standing there, before you get through with the skein. Sit down, and let me hold it for you."

I had never addressed her so familiarly before, but, some how, she looked so fair, and pure, and childlike, with her delicate profile half turned towards me, and her face settling, every few moments, into a puzzled seriousness over her ball, that the words came unconsciously to my lips. She did not answer me, only her eyes flashed up a moment in my face, and then filled with tears. She sat down quietly, and finished winding the skein, while her aunt told

some story of an old-fashioned knitting strife in her girlhood.

"What is it, Janet?"

I asked her this question as we stood together in the front door, after she had finished her task.

"It was the name my father used to call me. I never have heard it since he went away. Oh, say it again, Mr. Grayson!"

She was just like a child now, with that pleading face, which stirred my soul to take her up and fold her to my heart.

"Janet, I will say the words again, if you will call me once by my name—the name I have not heard from the lips of a woman since my mother died." She bowed her head, and I knew why she did not speak to me. I laid my hand on her hair, shining like brown meshes in the sunbeams. "My child, my little Janet, may the Lord God bless you, and cause the light of His countenance to shine upon you!"

There was a little silence.

"Nathaniel!"

It fluttered timidly out of her lips, and dropped into my heart, and the sound is there still.

"The sunshine is warm, but there is a breeze in the tree-tops, and it is cool off there among the meadows, under the apple-trees. It is a shady walk, if we go round by the creek. Will you get your bonnet, Janet?"

And Janet went.

We sat down in the long grass under the apple-trees. A part of the field had been mowed the day before, and the air was full of the sweet scents of the crushed flowers.

"Isn't it delicious?" asked Janet, taking off her bonnet.

"Yes. Death often yields more sweetness than life. I said this, to-day, in order to comfort myself, when I remembered that only two days more of this blessed summer remained to me."

"Only two more!"

A quick start, a tone of deep regret emphasized the words.

"That is all, and I had a letter from my friend, the principal of the seminary to which you are engaged, stating that he should like you to be there by the eighth. I cannot bear the thought that I must give up my little teacher so soon."

"I shall have no more such easy teaching."

She said it sadly, and tremulously, too, as though she dared not trust her voice.

"I owe you more than I do all my other teachers, Janet. You have done me the most good."

"I, Mr. Grayson!"

"Yes, for you have shown me what a true, noble, self-sustained woman may be in all circumstances, because you have redeemed and consecrated life to me once more—*because you have restored my lost faith in woman.*"

Her soul rose into her face. "I cannot tell how I have done this, Mr. Grayson," she faltered.

"No matter; but now my heart is sad with the thought of losing my little teacher; I want to be her pupil always, to learn daily new lessons of woman's grace, and truth, and loveliness, such as all men need, from her lips and her life."

Her head dropped till her breath fluttered the dandelion blossoms she had gathered and strewn in her lap. I took her small, slender hands in mine. "Will you take me, Janet, to be your pupil, not for days, or months, or terms, but for life?"

And God and I heard Janet Mathews make a whispered answer.

"Nathaniel! Nathaniel!" she said, a little while after, with her sweet tones winding their caresses in and out of the syllables. "It is a soft, sweet, gliding name; how your mother must have loved it!"

And then I told her how I had seen her for the first time from my chamber window, that summer morning, three months ago, when I sat there under the burden of my newly found wealth, with no heart to be gathered into mine; no other life added to my own, to enrich, and

complete, and satisfy it; lonely, unloved, and rich; and I told her all my vague fancies and conjectures as I watched her bending over her work.

"And you found your ideal over a wash-tub! What a terribly unromantic heroine!" And a laugh ran in merry gurgles out of her lips. But she grew serious in a few moments. "It cost me a struggle, a short but a sharp one, though, to go up to the hotel and apply for that washing."

"My brave, noble girl, I know it must. But if you had not done it, we might have gone apart all the days of our lives."

"And you will take me, Nathaniel, you, so cultivated, fastidious, and almost a millionaire, me without a dollar in the world, and whom you found over a wash-tub?"

"And finding there my own lily, I was a richer man than all the gold in my uncle's coffers made me." I said this with her head lying on my shoulder, and her little hands crushed up in mine, while the day was going, with its golden feet, over the far off hills; going to meet the night.

At last we rose up and went home. Our hearts have been at home with each other ever since.

Little Janet is my wife now, and all she has been to me of strength, and rest, and healing, of grace, and refreshment, and beauty, of truth, of faith, and of love, is it not all written in the book of His remembrance?

THE CHILD'S GIFT.

BY ANNIE FRAUST.

(See plate.)

It was an intensely hot day in August, when a steamer came puffing up to a New York wharf to disembark its load of passengers. That living tide poured into the city, and greetings, loud and hearty, were exchanged on every side. Gradually all left the wharf, and there came forth from the steerage a lad, with a hurdy-gurdy under his arm. He came with a slow, lagging step over the plank, turning to cast lingering, almost longing looks at the vessel, as if loth to leave it. He was very meanly dressed in a loose blouse and short trousers, no shoes or stockings, and a coarse felt hat with a blue silk ribbon round it. He stood upon the wharf, looking first towards the city, then again turning to the steamer, while large tears rolled down his dark cheeks.

Pedro Carnavelli was an Italian boy, whose father had taken him from Italy to England, and from there had embarked for America to make his fortune. On the passage from England, Pedro's father died, and the prospects for a fortune seemed dark enough, as the lad stood so lonely and friendless upon the wharf, listening to the Babel of tongues around him, all speaking a strange language to the poor boy, listening in the vain hope of hearing one word of his own musical language. The vessel seemed almost like a home, compared with this new country. There, where his father died, he had had kind, sympathizing looks, warm pressures of the hand, and words in a tone which assured him of kindness, even though he did not understand the tongue. There he had last seen his poor father, and heard the words of parting. Poor Pedro!

At length, drying his tears, with one deep parting sigh, he took his last look at the steamer, and walked on through the streets of the great city. After wandering on for several hours, he began to feel faint and hungry, and his wondering looks at the novelties around him were checked by the recollection that he was penniless, homeless, and most pitifully hungry.

He was in front of a large dry-goods store in Broadway, and, in a luxurious carriage near the door, he saw a little girl, richly dressed, looking with childish curiosity at his hurdy-gurdy.

Thinking to earn pennies enough to buy a meal, he began to play. The child crowed loud with delight, clapping her hands and calling, "Pretty boy! pretty music!" and pulling her nurse's bonnet-strings to make her turn her head and listen to the sounds which pleased her so much.

Pedro drew near the carriage. He was a passionate lover of beauty, and the child's lovely face, beaming with pleasure, afforded him as much pleasure as he was giving her by his music.

"Pretty little lady, give Pedro one little piece of money," he said, drawing on his small stock of English.

But the nurse did not turn her head, and the little one was too young to heed the appeal.

"Stand aside!" said a rough voice, and the liveried footman pushed Pedro away from the carriage door. Two ladies in cool, light silks passed him, stepped into the carriage, the door was closed, and it rolled away, leaving him unheeded where he stood. It was a poor beginning, and, sighing heavily, Pedro trudged on. Daylight was fading and he had made no money all day, and had no shelter for the night. True, it was summer, and the Italian boy would have found it no great hardship to sleep in the open air, but he was weary and sick with hunger. He sat down on the step of a store, which was closed, and began to play, hoping some charitable individual would pass and pay him for his toil.

"What are you doing here?" said a man, stopping before him.

"Charity!" said Pedro, holding out his hand.

"Humph! a beggar! Come, get up, I want to go in here." And the man passed him and went into the store.

Pedro's heart sank. Must he starve in this large city? At that instant the notes of a hand organ fell upon his ear. He rose slowly, and, following the sound, he soon came up with the owner. Joy! he was an Italian. Sobbing with joy, Pedro told his story to the man, who listened with sympathy.

"You must come home with me to-night," he said, "and to-morrow we will see what to do with you."

With a lightened heart, Pedro trudged beside his new friend through the large streets, then into a narrow court, until he finally stopped before a small house, opened the door, and beckoned Pedro to follow him.

The evening was passed pleasantly. Pedro's home had been in the same village which Angnoli had left six years before, and he could give his countryman information touching his own friends and relatives, with lively descriptions of life aboard ship, and his short visit to England. In the morning, Angnoli advised the lad to try the country. He took him in the cars to a locality where there were many handsome country-seats, and left him there to try his fortune, advising him to remain several days, and if he did not succeed to return to him again and form new plans. Wringing his friend's hand, and with hearty good wishes for his success, Pedro saw him return to the city, while he, taking up his hurdy-gurdy, walked down the road.

It was a lovely day; the sky was clear and blue, with white, fleecy clouds lying like snow mountains with an azure background; above him, tall trees waved with a rustling noise, and little birds fluttered about in the branches, singing, twittering, and joyous; under his feet, the soft grass was much more grateful than the burning bricks of yesterday, and the boy wandered on, singing as he went, full of thankfulness for the beauties around him. There was a rich color in his cheeks; the large black eyes were full of joyousness; the lips, parted in giving forth musical notes, revealed white, even rows of teeth, and the Pedro of the country walk seemed quite a different being from the sad, listless boy seen the day before in Broadway. Soon beautiful villas were seen on the road through which he passed, with groups of children sporting under the trees. Pedro turned the handle of his instrument and stopped before the gate of one of these mansions. In a moment he was surrounded by children—little girls in white dresses, with floating curls, little tottling boys not yet in jackets, and the nurses of these little ones, too, came round the handsome Italian boy to listen to the music. He played a lively waltz, and the children spinning round on the smooth lawn made quite as pretty a picture as a crowded, heated ball-room. From the other houses, too, the children began to come out and gather round the young musician, and ladies came out upon the porches to watch the pretty, graceful dances, each probably singling out her own darling as the prettiest and most graceful of the group.

When the pleasure was at its height, Pedro doffed his hat and passed it round. The children darted off in all directions to find indulgent parents and solicit pennies, and Pedro, leaving his hat on the grass, played again, a well-pleased smile playing round his beautiful mouth. Soon the little white robed fairies came again, and pennies and small pieces of silver were showered into the hat.

"Pretty little lady," said Pedro, singling out one of the little girls, who, wearied with dancing and running, stood close beside him listening, "will give Pedro a little piece of bread?"

"Let's give him his dinner!" said the child, running up to the porch. "Mamma, he wants a piece of bread."

"Take him round to the kitchen and give him his dinner," said the lady in the porch, kindly.

"Stay, little lady, one little minute. Pedro sing for you."

He placed his hurdy-gurdy on a bench, and stood leaning against a tree. The children gathered close around him, and, with a beaming smile, Pedro bowed his head and began to sing. His voice was pure and clear, and he sang with feeling. The song was a peasant's song of southern Italy, praising sky, field, and flower, and, impressed, inspired with the scene around him, Pedro sang with his whole heart. The children could not understand the words, but the melody was lively and beautiful, and his "round of applause" was hearty enough to have gratified the hearts of any of his countrymen bowing over the footlights.

"Come again to-morrow. Be sure you come to-morrow," cried his little audience, as he left the grounds, after a hearty dinner, and a handful of small coins in his pocket.

"Si, si, I come to-morrow. Addio, Grazia Signora." And he bowed gracefully to the lady in the porch, and went his way again over the smooth grass. Towards evening, wearied with his day's walk, he sat down to rest on the stone steps leading to a large, handsome garden. The sun was sinking slowly below the horizon, and, as his eye fell on the gorgeous western sky, Pedro's thoughts flew over the wide sea to Italy. He thought of the little cottage where, the potted child of poor but indulgent parents, he had watched many such sunsets, for, from his infancy, the boy had been an enthusiastic lover of nature. Then his mother's death, the long sea voyage, his father's funeral at sea, when all that remained for Pedro to love was lowered over the ship's side, all this came back

to him, and the large tears hung on his eyelashes as he leaned heavily against the wall.

"Pretty boy, here's a penny."

Pedro turned his head. The speaker was a blue-eyed, fair-haired little girl, and he recognized the child for whom he had played in Broadway the day before.

"Don't cry, pretty boy," said the child, dropping the penny into his hand. "Have a posy, pretty boy?" And she chose one white rose from many flowers that she held in her apron.

Pedro took the little white, chubby hand in his and raised it to his lips, and then, taking up his hat, went forward again.

The penny which the child had given him had a hole in it, and, with a piece of twine, Pedro hung it on his neck, hiding it under the ragged blouse.

A few days later, Pedro was sitting by the bank of a pretty running brook. He was leaning forward over a large piece of rock, his fingers holding a wooden-covered lead-pencil with which he was drawing on an old envelope he had picked up on the road. The day was Sunday, and his hurdy-gurdy was hanging in a barn, upon the floor of which he had slept for several nights, paying a few pennies to an old farmer for the privilege. Pedro was sketching the face of the pretty child who had given him the white rose. The round, dimpled cheeks, the smiling mouth, short, wavy hair, and soft, large eyes were all faithfully transferred to the large white envelope, upon which the address had left a blank space. As he finished, he raised his sketch and looked at it; a paper fluttered from the envelope and fell at the boy's feet. He took it up. A bank note for five hundred dollars was in his hand. Pedro knew its value, and his heart gave a heavy throb of joy as he thought of the treasure he had found. Then, thrusting aside the unworthy temptation, he looked at the envelope for the address:—

MR. GEORGE L. HASTINGS,
Melrose, N. Y.

Melrose! He was in Melrose, and could easily find out by inquiry where Mr. Hastings lived. He put the note back into the envelope, thrust his pencil into his pocket, and, holding the paper fast in his hand, started for the barn, his only substitute for a home. In the yard, he met the farmer's wife.

"Can you tell me," he said, "where live Mr. George Hastings?"

"Mr. Hastings! He lives about a mile down this road. You walk down there, and anybody can point out the house."

"Grazia!"

Pedro started down the road, feeling a strong anxiety to get the note out of his own hands. The strong temptation to keep it was frightening the boy, and he sped along the road, looking on each side as he passed for some one to direct him to the house. At last, a gentleman passed in a carriage, and Pedro put the question to him.

"There!" he said, pointing to a house; "that is Mr. Hastings' house."

Pedro bowed and smiled. He felt willing enough to seek that house, for it was there that he had dined on his first day in Melrose, and played to the pretty fairies on the lawn.

He rang the bell, and in another moment a man opened the door.

"Is Mr. Hastings live here?"

"Yes."

"I want see him."

"You?" said the man, contemptuously; "you?"

"I want see him," said the boy again.

"What do you want?"

"I want see Mr. Hastings. Tell him I here."

"What is it, John?" said a little girl, coming into the entry. "O Pedro!"

"I want see Mr. Hastings, Signorina."

"Papa? Well, come with me."

Pedro followed her into the library. A tall, handsome man, with gray hair and mild blue eyes, was reading there.

"Papa," said the little girl, "here is Pedro, our Italian boy, wants to see you."

"Well, my lad," said the gentleman, "what is it?"

"You lose five hundred dollare bill?" said Pedro.

"Yes, on the road, in an envelope," said the gentleman. "I drew it out with some other papers, and dropped it, I presume. Have you found it?"

"Si, Signor, that him." And he laid the envelope upon the table near which Mr. Hastings was seated.

"Do you know the value of this? what it would buy?" inquired Mr. Hastings.

Pedro nodded. "Buy papers, pencils, pictures, many, great deal; buy shoes, coat, hat, many, great deal." And the boy laughed, as he looked at his own bare feet.

"Papers, pencils— Ha! what is this?" And Mr. Hastings took up the envelope. "Did you draw that?" And he pointed to the head of the child.

"Why, papa, that is Carrie Conway, the little

girl who lives up the road, in the house with the stone wall round the garden."

"Si, Signorina," cried Pedro, delighted to have his picture recognized. "Stone wall, stone steps. Pedro cry there for Italia! Little lady angel give Pedro this." And he displayed his penny.

Mr. Hastings was closely examining the sketch upon the envelope. Although not professionally an artist, Mr. Hastings was a true connoisseur, and could paint with much taste and some skill. He read genius in every line of the sketch before him. Turning to the lad, he addressed him in his own musical Italian.

"You drew this head?"

"Yes."

"Should you like to study painting?"

The boy's eyes glowed, his cheek burned, as, clasping his hands together, he said: "Ah, that would be heaven!"

With a few skillful questions, Mr. Hastings drew from the lad the whole of his simple history; and, as he looked on the handsome, intelligent face, lit with large eyes through which genius shone, he could not reconcile the face and manner with the life of a roving, hurdy-gurdy boy.

"You have returned to me this money, which I had thought lost entirely," said Mr. Hastings. "I shall use it to procure you clothing, and put you in a school in New York. You can repay me when you are a great artist."

My space will not permit me to dwell upon Pedro's school life. His affectionate disposition and unwavering gratitude endeared him more and more to Mr. Hastings, his wife, and the little Lizzie; and, after his graduation from the New York school, Mr. Hastings sent him to Italy to study the art which was his love and delight, growing in his heart deeper with each year of study.

It was fourteen years since Pedro Carnavelli landed in New York for the first time, when again the European steamer landed its passengers on the New York wharf, and again the Italian stepped on American ground—not now a ragged boy, friendless, homeless, and forlorn, but a tall, handsome young man, with a faultless costume, and no sooner off the vessel than amongst friends. Mr. Hastings stood on the wharf, and a young man, Lizzie's husband, for Lizzie had been two years married, stood beside him. Other friends, schoolboy companions, were also there to welcome Mr. Hastings' adopted son, Pedro Carnavelli, back to America.

Melrose again! Pedro leaned far out of the

carriage, as they drove from the station. All the well-known objects were hailed with delight by the enthusiastic lover of nature, until they drove up to the door of Mr. Hastings' house, and then came welcomes and embraces from Mrs. Hastings and Lizzie, happy enough to welcome home the wanderer, who was loved like a son and brother by the family of his benefactor.

"No, my lazy friend, you cannot lounge another minute in that chair," said Lizzie, as, after dinner, Pedro threw himself into an arm-chair. "You are to be the lion of a ball, to-night."

"A ball! Oh, Lizzie, can't I stay here?"

"No, sir. I have promised to bring with me Signor Pedro Carnavelli, whose picture of "Hope" drew the prize this year at the Paris exhibition, whose landscape was purchased by the greatest connoisseur in London for his private collection, whose fame—"

"Stop! stop! I will go. Even a ball is preferable to such a hail-storm of commendation. Who gives this ball, so early in the season?"

"Early? Why, next week begins November. This ball is given by Mrs. Mattison, of Fifth Avenue, who is quite delighted at the prospect of being the first to secure you. She sent me an invitation for you before the steamer had been in an hour. We go to the St. Nicholas from here, dress there, and return there after the ball till to-morrow. Come! it is late now to be just starting."

"Well, if I must, I must, Mrs. Wayne. Harry, pity me."

"Pity you! Why, my dear fellow, ever since the last picture you sent over has been on exhibition, you have been the rage. You will be the lion of this season."

"Harry! Pedro! go get ready to start," said the imperative Lizzie, shaking back her dark curls, and chasing her husband fairly out of the room.

"Miss Conway, allow me to introduce Signor Carnavelli. Miss Conway has just returned from Paris," added Mrs. Mattison, aside, to Pedro; "has been in Europe for five years. Educated there."

Pedro bowed to the young lady, and his artist's eye dwelt with delight upon her face. She was very fair, dazzlingly so, with a faint, very faint color. Her hair was arranged in broad braided loops upon her neck, and a few brilliant scarlet flowers, with dark green leaves, were twisted in the braids; round her face, it fell in full, soft, golden curls. Her large, soft

eyes were dark blue, and the features were perfect as if carved from a classic statue.

Pedro spoke to her in Italian. He longed to hear his own musical language syllabled by the perfect, childlike mouth. Miss Conway answered instantly in the same tongue, and her voice was as sweet as he had hoped for. They strolled through the long rooms, stopping occasionally before some picture or statue, chatting of Italy, France, of the galleries with which both were familiar, and the scenes they remembered so vividly. Pedro did not dance for several sets; the white-robed blonde, with her angel face, was too fascinating to be left soon, and it was only when her hand was claimed by another gentleman—whom Pedro mentally wished in Halifax—that he resigned his place beside her.

"Tell me, Lizzie," he said, joining Mrs. Wayne, "who is the lady I was walking with."

"Miss Conway? Her father was quite wealthy at one time, when she was a little girl. They lived near us at Melrose. When her mother died, he took her to Europe to have her educated. About two years ago he died, leaving her without one cent. She remained in the school in Paris, as teacher, where she had once been pupil; and when Mrs. Mattison came home, some months ago, Miss Conway came with her as governess to Laura. This is her first appearance in society, and her last, I suspect."

"Why?"

"Oh, Mrs. Mattison may bring her out at her own parties, but it is not likely that any one else will invite a governess to theirs."

"Oh!"

Pedro's studio in New York was quite the fashion; and many of the ladies who came to it that the handsome Italian might transfer their features to canvas, were the leaders of the ton. Amongst these were Mrs. Mattison and her daughter Laura, a handsome brunette, of about seventeen. When Mrs. Mattison could not accompany her daughter, a slight, fair girl, in a dark brown merino, with a close cottage bonnet and thick veil, came with Miss Laura.

"Only Miss Conway, my governess, one of ma's pets," Miss Mattison told Pedro, and let her sit silently in a corner or near the window, whilst he painted.

Pedro accepted the introduction to "only Miss Conway" with his usual graceful bow, but his eyes often wandered from the dark beauty of his subject to the graceful figure near the window, though he did not address her more frequently than courtesy required.

One afternoon, Pedro was sauntering along Broadway, with no particular object in view, when before him he saw the dark merino dress and close bonnet which had so often graced his studio. The wearer was walking slowly, as if wearied, and Pedro easily overtook her. She started at his salutation, but gracefully replied to it, smiling, as if his handsome, cheerful face were not unwelcome to her.

"You look weary," said Pedro, in a gentle tone.

"I am very tired. I have been walking nearly four hours, trying to match a dress-trimming for Miss Laura."

"Have you found it?"

"Not yet."

"Walk into the Dusseldorf Gallery with me for a few moments; there is a picture there I want to ask your opinion about. Oh, I will not detain you long," he added, as she hesitated.

"For a few moments, then."

The temptation was a strong one for the wearied governess, whose opportunities for seeing the works of art were very few, and she allowed him to guide her across Broadway to the building.

He chose a seat opposite the picture he said was the one he wished her to admire, and then said: "Let me see the dress-trimming—you know artists have a quick eye for colors; perhaps I can tell you where to match it."

She drew it from her pocket, and handed it to him.

"Wait here for me a little while," he said, after a moment's scrutiny of the elaborate trimming; and before she could answer, he was gone, dress-trimming and all.

She wandered through the room, enjoying keenly every picture worthy of notice, not heeding the lapse of time, till the gathering darkness warned her that it was getting very late. She looked at her watch. Seven o'clock! It was nearly three hours since Pedro had left her. She was wondering anxiously what to do, when he came in.

"See! is not the match perfect?" And he held up the pattern and a piece of trimming.

"Oh, how kind, how very kind you are!" said Miss Conway, taking the pattern.

"It will do, then?"

"Yes, but you have bought a whole piece; I only wanted three yards."

"How shall we measure it? Can you guess? Take it home, and cut off the three yards. You can bring the rest to me to-morrow, when Miss Laura comes to sit. Don't forget. I

want it for my wife's wedding-dress." And he laughed.

"Don't trim her wedding-dress with *green*," said his companion, laughing also.

"I must see you home now; it is quite dark. No objections, if you please. I kept you here till this late hour, and you must submit to my escort."

It was a pleasant walk. To Carrie Conway, whose life had now few glimpses of sunshine, it was a pleasant era in a toilsome existence; and to Pedro it was pleasant, too—pleasant to look at the fair, childlike face raised to his; pleasant to hear the pure Italian from so sweet a voice; pleasant to hear a young lady with some subject besides dress and the opera to converse upon.

Carrie bore the fretful chidings for her long absence quietly, and slipped away to her own room to rest after her long walk, to think over all its pleasant converse.

The next day, at the studio, Pedro received the trimming for his wife's wedding-dress, in a neat package, and in an envelope was the price of the three yards cut off. Pedro opened the package when he was alone, and, after putting the money away, he took from his writing desk a penny and laid it on the palm of his hand. Upon the penny was engraved in tiny letters, "The Child's Gift," and on the other side, round the liberty head, the words, "Carrie Conway, Melrose, Aug. 17th, 18—." Pedro held it in his open hand for a moment, then his fingers clutched tightly over it as if he would never lose their grasp.

Many times, Carrie was overtaken in her walks by quick, manly steps, and found six feet of Italian beside her, talking on every subject; and Laura Mattison spoke of Signor Carnavelli as one of her conquests, for he was constantly spending evenings with her. On these occasions he never spoke to Carrie beyond the requirements of etiquette, but his eye often rested upon her graceful figure and beautiful head as she bent over her needle-work. When he sang duets with Miss Mattison, Miss Conway always played the accompaniments, and sometimes joined a clear soprano voice in the trios, and I will not positively affirm that Pedro's hand never touched hers as he turned the leaves or they selected the music, but Laura saw nothing to disturb her equanimity.

"Signor Carnavelli, tell me what you wear on that mysterious gold chain of which I occasionally catch a glimpse as you bend forward," said Laura, one evening, as he sat beside

her on the sofa, Carrie being seated opposite, sewing.

"A relic, Miss Laura." And he drew forth the coin which he had clutched so tightly a few evenings before.

The light was dim where they sat, being near Carrie, and Laura did not perceive the delicate letters; she saw only a copper penny.

"It was given to me at Melrose, when I was a boy, some fourteen years ago. I had walked far that day, and I was thinking of Italy, homesick and weary, when a little child, thinking I was in need, gave me the coin, and with it words of sympathy. Miss Conway, will you look at it?"

Carrie took it. In the full blaze of light, striking from under the shade over the gas-burners, she instantly detected the letters. A vivid blush mounted to her cheeks as she read the words and the long-forgotten incident came to her mind. Child as she had been, she recalled the weary hurdy-gurdy boy resting against the wall, and her own pitying impulse to comfort the "pretty boy." She did not look up as she laid the coin again in Pedro's extended hand, and Laura only saw that Miss Conway had looked at a coin and returned it.

"Will you come, both of you, to my studio to-morrow, to see my picture for the next exhibition," said Pedro, as he rose to take his leave.

The invitation was accepted, and the next morning the two ladies visited the studio. The picture was called "Charity," and Carrie Conway recognized the stone wall, the steps, the trees, and, above all, the group of figures; the dark Italian boy, with his ragged yet picturesque dress, the child dropping a piece of money into his extended palm, the nurse supporting the child's little figure, Carrie knew them all. Laura was looking at her own portrait, which hung upon the wall opposite, her back to Carrie. Carrie was looking with tearful eyes at the picture, when a low, tender voice said:—

"I have the Child's Gift of Charity, yet, beggar that I am, I covet a richer gift now. Can you guess it?"

She did not speak.

"Carrie, may I call you mine, my wife?"

She answered by placing her hand in his, and Laura turned and interrupted the *tête-à-tête*.

Two months later, Mr. Hastings superintended the last touches to the house he intended as a wedding gift to his adopted son, Pedro Carnavelli, and the bride who presided over it was Carrie Carnavelli, née Conway.

THE FROZEN HEART.

A WOMAN'S STORY.

BY MARY W. JANVRIN, AUTHOR OF "PEACE," "AUNT BETHIAH'S VISIT," "JACASSA'S JOURNAL," ETC. ETC.

Why did I marry him!—so ran the manuscript my friend had placed in my hands. Why did I marry him? By right, I should have mated myself with one of a sunny, care-free nature, as a foil to the quiet gravity of my own—not him, with his high imperiousness, at times verging into slavish, haughty exactions. I was too thoroughly a self-centred, outwardly undemonstrative woman, too rigid of right and self-respect, to yield a continued submission to the caprices of a man, now forbiddingly cold, now almost boyish in his bursts of hot passion, at all times—Heaven forgive me, as I write it of *my husband!*—arrogant, exacting, selfish.

Once, I could not have guided pen to record this: but now, looking upon him with eyes purified from the glamour of that fascinating worship which enveloped every sense of my being; noting how the tides of this passion have slowly ebbed away year by year, leaving my heart barren, drear, frozen; standing on the desolate strand, I can point out to you, my friend, whose eyes will read these pages, the

once hidden under-shoals whereon my barque of happiness was shattered. So the escaped, shipwrecked mariner, with wan face and desolated life, walking along the wild lee-shore, when the trident of King Neptune has awed the storm-waves into obedient fear, points away over the low, curling breakers, laughing with their cruel, scornful teeth of white foam, and, shuddering, says: "Lo! there, beyond, lie the treacherous rocks that wrested from me love, laughter, rosy lips, clinging hands, and every blessing of my life!"

I have said I loved him once—Heaven knows how tenderly, how blindly! Had one come to me three years ago, that morning I stood Lionel Rossiter's wife, and said, "Mark me! the days will come when you will say of love and hope, 'I have no pleasure in them,' and a great gulf shall lie between your married hearts," I would have stricken such dumb with a fine scorn. I doubt if the woman lives who, on her bridal-day, gave herself more entirely to the man she promised to cleave to "until death do us part"

than did I. It were impossible! I rendered him more than love—idolatry. I struck a blow at the primal command, "Have ye no other gods before Me;" hence, my punishment came. I am not of those who believe man or woman escapes the transgressor's reward in *this* life. Though I laughed at this theory once, I hold it true as the law of cause and effect now; I have seen it proved a hundred, ay, a thousand times, in the experiences of others—mayhap sooner, mayhap long-deferred—and it came to me in my own.

So my punishment came. I built a shrine in the innermost of a haughty heart; I placed thereon an idol. God permitted worship for a season, then crumbled the image into grossest clay. This idol—men had named him Lionel Rossiter; I called him "my fate." I never told you what I write here—that I was a fatalist in those days. The common forms of a common religion I did not spurn outwardly; to the world, who knew me by my written works, I was held up as a pattern and teacher of good; but I know now that deep in my soul I held a seated scorn against the religion of the lowly God-Man. "This simple creed will do for the ignorant, the unambitious, the earth-dweller; but for those who walk higher paths of science, philosophy, and reason, let there live a faith more mysterious, more profound." Thus I said to my own heart, till, from believing alternately in many systems of so-called religion, I came to believe in none save that *dernier* and blindest mysticism of a humanity which cannot wholly dare to pilot itself out alone on the great ocean of the unknown—*fate*. Yet do not think, my friend, that I gave utterance to these sentiments in those days. Living the quiet, uneventful life I led, no tangible contact with the outward world provoked disclosure. I read, wrote, wrought, and dreamed—a chrysalis infolded in its shell.

But all inward theories must, some day, work outward; and theories will not satisfy the heart of woman—she must have some tangible god to worship. So, when Lionel Rossiter came, I met him as one I had long awaited; fate had worked to his fulfilment—the god had become man; and then, by the alchemy of love, I transmuted the earth into fine gold, the man back to god again. I set him upon the shrine of the altar, and brought my every gift—talent, genius, an earnest resolve, and the pride of a reserve that had never melted hitherto—to lay them, the "frankincense and myrrh," at his feet. Perhaps the language is strong, and pains you, reading this, my friend, but I must tell it in

my own way, if you would have this story of my life.

I was twenty-five when I first met Lionel Rossiter. The first bloom of youth had passed, but it had brought me, instead, the larger experiences of the woman. And yet, at twenty-five, my heart was younger than many a maiden's, years my junior, for I had not matured early; I had escaped all those so-called "flirtations" which, even as the wanton hand brushes from the butterfly's wing the down that never returns, despoil the first soft freshness of a girl's affections. So, when Lionel Rossiter came to the old brown-stone house where I lived my quiet life with my mother and my brother—when his hand flung wide the portal of a temple more enchanting far than graceful cloud-land castle, or those splendid palaces that hang upon the ruin of Oriental deserts, but which, alas, the wanderer's feet may never gain—when he besought my hand to join in his, that he might lead me over the threshold of this temple named Married Love—was it wonder that I would have followed him, as did the happy princess of olden story,

"Over the hills and far away,
Beyond the twilight's purple rim,
And deep into the dying day?"

All this would I have done for him who broke my charmed soul-slumber with his love-kiss.

Had you known me in those days, you would have known also that none called me beautiful. There was little to snare men's hearts in the pale, thin face that had no light save, rarely, a sudden crimson flush, that vanished as suddenly, on the cheeks, the gaze of large, luminous midnight eyes, or the broad, prominent forehead shaded by masses of weird black hair. But I have thought I was not wholly unpleasing to him, for, sometimes, he used to stroke my head caressingly, and, looking deep into the eyes he called "clear wells of thought," say, laughingly, "You are tolerable, passable, Mildred; I am satisfied with you!" None had called me beautiful, but men said I was dowried with that God-given boon, genius, the fruits whereof I had given to the outer world before he came, but not *now*. His praise was the Chinese wall that girt my desires. If I read or wrote, it was for him; if I improvised songs, it was to breathe them to my guitar while he sat at my feet, in the old dim parlor, with the wainscotted panelling, the portraits on the wall, and the dying sunset splendors staining the western windows with a tide of crimson blood.

I will tell you now of the quiet life I had lived in the old brown stone house before he

came. It was not that we avoided the social mood, but I suppose my mother buried the half of her heart in the sea which held my father's coffin; and, though the poor blessed the thin lady-hand that dispensed bounty, the world of fashion in the neighboring sea-port town rarely beheld her before that event which, of late, kept her a prisoner—half nurse, wholly tender mother—at our dear invalid's side.

Eddie's room! It is before me like a picture to-day. The pleasant apartment facing the south; the large, low windows, whose light was tempered by heavy folding curtains; the carpet of vines and roses; the pure white draped bed; the low chair for my mother; my own seat near the invalid's table; the landscapes (Eddie's paintings) of mountains bathed in purple lights and shadows, shady forest scenes, or soft, foamy waterfalls, that always brought a dream of summer into the heart of the dreariest winter's day; the low chintz-covered lounge; the little round table at the window, on which stood a writing-desk with a porcelain inkstand whose lid was supported by a tiny Ganymede, and a glass crowded with flowers; the painter's easel, with its pendent brushes and palette, near by, within reach of the invalid; and, last of all, the bamboo chair wherein sat, reclined, or slept, on heaped pillows, our darling.

Eddie had not been always thus. There was a time when a gay, handsome youth, exuberant with life, bounded with a firm foot over the threshold, and whose muscular arms lifted and tossed his three year elder sister like a feather; but there came a day when a band of brave young swimmers, contesting for the prize cup, upbore from out the river's waves the exhausted form of the winner, and thence to his home and bed, pallid and exhausted—a bed which the ardent collegian never quitted again, save for his ride in the wheeled carriage through the smooth garden walks, or to be lifted to his seat in the bamboo chair at the south window, for our Eddie was a helpless cripple.

Looking on the poor boy, who, on the verge of promising, vigorous manhood, had been suddenly hurled back into almost helpless childhood again; whose feet could never more bound buoyantly among his classmates; whose arms, that once clove the river's waters, now, shrunken and emaciated, feebly essayed to lift a book, or guide the brush or pencil on the easel; and whose chest, once bare, sinewy, and polished as the Grecian Antinous', had glanced foremost with the line of swimmers, but now absorbed, oh how wearily! to ease the struggling

lungs beneath; looking on Eddie thus, I think now that my mother's eye was prophetic, seeing unto the end; but to me the decline, so gentle, so gradual, the transparent clearness of the white temples and thin hands, and the splendid, blooming damask roses on the wasting cheek, brought no reality of fear, only a dim, undefined shadow. I knew that Eddie could never be strong again, our kind old family physician had said this sorrowfully; but I never dreamed that the dear invalid might not be spared us many years, to sit there in his bamboo easy-chair, a part of the pleasantness of the room; like his pictures on the walls, the flowers in the glass, the sunshine that fell in of mornings at the south windows.

I think I loved my mother much as most girls do; but when Lionel Rossiter asked me to become his wife, I thought involuntarily first of Eddie and his loneliness. In those five years which had passed since he sat daily in the invalid-chair while I worked or read to him, or reclined on his pillows while I sat at the writing-desk as he slept—he growing daily into all the tender loveliness of sweet resignation, and I into the enjoyment of what the world outside called fame—a deeper intimacy than is common to ordinary brother and sister sprang up between us. I wonder now that the influences of those days might not have moulded me into a different being, for I loved this sweet Christian brother most truly; but they did not. I have said that I was quiet, self-centred, grave, usually; but underneath all slept a heart of fire, a slumbering volcano of feeling, the strength and depth whereof I did not fully dream, though I was conscious of this dormant nature at times; as when, for instance, the night after Lionel Rossiter had told me his love, I stood before my mirror, startled at the vivid crimson of the cheeks and lips, and the lambent fire-sparks from eyes that met me there. And the volcanic heart, how it beat in wildest, fiery throes beneath!

Lionel urged an immediate union. "I want you at once, my Mildred," he said. "I must cage my song-bird to sing for me alone. You will not mind it if I am a little selfish, little one?"

Mind it? O no! Why should I? It suited to the finest fibre of my own nature, this in tense devotion. I smiled, I put back the hair, the soft brown hair, from a broad, low forehead; I bent to leave a kiss on lips whose strong curves were softened into tenderness.

I have not described to you my friend Lionel Rossiter's *personale*. None would have pro-

nounced him handsome, I think, that is, as the standard of manly beauty is usually held. A physiognomist would have said that, though on the broad full brow Intellect had set her seal, though the blue eyes expressed now fire and haughtiness, now every tender emotion, the mouth was the exponent also of the character, that mouth with large, full lips about which lay strongly-defined lines, telling of undoubted will, and perhaps a share of coarser passions. But to me, looking through that love-lens which warped every object to its own focus, he seemed the embodiment of my ideal of a noble, perfect manhood. Looking back on him now, I bethink me that his better nature, the intellectual, ruled him when he chose me for his wife, for, as I have said, I had not the gift of personal beauty to tempt a sensuous regard.

"Mildred, I am proud of you," he said, one day, "I shall be proud of you for your gifts and your fame. But I shall want you to dedicate them to me. Nay, don't misunderstand me," he added, noticing a slight shrinking, and a look akin to pain on my face. "You are too sensitive." And he smiled. "When we are married, we shall be one, and you will be willing to devote these talents to me?" He said this inquiringly. I was blinded, dazzled. I bowed assent. "I am a strange being," he went on; "men call me odd. You are the first who ever approached towards understanding me. I think our marriage will bring me happiness." (He did not say it will bring us happiness; mark it, my friend!) "You have told me that you love me. Do you think it is such a love as will allow you to devote yourself entirely to me?" He looked deep into my eyes when he said this, and the lines about his mouth were defined more strongly.

"I love you *entirely*, Lionel." It was all I said, but it pleased him. The deep lines relaxed into a tender smile, rippling about lips that rarely smiled.

"I require a great deal, Mildred," he continued. "I shall want you wholly, soul, body, heart. There is a love, I have dreamed of it"—and, for a moment, he shaded his eyes with his hands—"such a love as not one woman in ten gives the man she calls husband. *Such* must I have, or nothing! Let us understand each other, Mildred; and if you think I am unreasonable or exacting, tell me so now."

For a moment, I sat mute. His gaze searched my face, and his own turned slightly pale—I thought with pain. Then "No, O no!" rushed passionately to my lips. But I knew it, even

while I laid my hand in his, I felt it, though dimly and vaguely as yet, that this was an unequal, selfish compact, a rendering of slavish submission on the one side, and the promise of nothing—no tender, cherishing, quiet affection—on the other. But the thrall was tightening round my heart, and I must obey. I bent and pressed my burning lips to his; it was the seal to our compact. In the faint twilight, I saw a smile flicker about his mouth. I only thought then that I had pleased him; but, recalling that smile to-day, I liken it to the half-sarcastic, half-flattered gleam of conscious power which I have seen upon the lips of him who has tamed a fierce, beautiful leopard to his feet. The clasp of his hand tightened over mine—a hand white, shapely, and soft as a woman's, yet firm as iron in its grasp.

"You promise me all this?" he asked.

"I promise." I could not, for my life, have uttered aught besides.

Next day, I broke to my mother our contemplated marriage. I should have told you that, all along, she had shown little favor for Mr. Rossiter, not that she had ever betrayed slight or discountenanced his visits openly, for that was not my mother's way, but she had treated him with polite coldness. Yet I was unprepared for the expressions of decided disapprobation which I saw on her countenance after listening to my confession. It was like that I had read on Eddie's face once when we had been talking of Mr. Rossiter. I will relate the incident. "Mildred, it seems that this new friend, or lover, of yours, whichever he is, does not intend that I shall get on any too intimate terms with his lordship, since he seldom comes into my room," Eddie had said, half-smilingly, to me, one day, as I sat beside him. "Really, I believe I've only spoken with him twice; and surely he's come over here from town every day these four weeks."

The hot blood rushed to my cheeks. "Oh, Edwin, I'm sure you ought not to blame him," I said, vehemently. "Mr. Rossiter cannot help it, if the sight of physical deformity or disease affects him to painfulness. He says it's constitutional with him. But you see he doesn't *forget* you!" And I pointed to a gorgeous cluster of exotics and a tray of tempting fruit which a serving-man had brought over, "With Mr. Rossiter's compliments," that morning from the hotel of the sea-port village.

A faint flush, which had risen on Eddie's cheek as I began to speak, died away. "I am sorry that I should have given Mr. Rossiter pain," he said, sadly, looking down on his

contracted limbs; then he went on half musingly, like one thinking aloud: "The dark days of pain and sickness must come for all—we cannot always live in the sunlight; and I fear it is a proud, selfish spirit which loves only the bright side of life. But pardon me, good sister," he said, as I caught his hand and kissed it, with a self-accusing, bitter pang at my heart that I had thoughtlessly wounded the dear invalid's gentle heart. "Believe me, I was not thinking of him in particular; I suppose I thought so once myself. I am grateful for the flowers!"—and he lifted the vase—"and, Mildred, I hope you may be happy."

I was deeply humiliated, and my eyes filled with tears; but the scales had not fallen yet. Thinking now of that pained look in Eddie's eyes as I rose and passed from the room—the same that I saw in my mother's on the morning when I talked with her first of my relation to Lionel Rossiter—I know that *both* then saw and feared what my blind eyes refused to recognize—that the selfishness which required the roses, careless whoever plucked the thorns, ruled the man.

"I did not dream this had advanced so far," said my mother, after a little pause. "My daughter, have you not been a little hasty? Do you understand Mr. Rossiter's character fully? Do you know him well enough to feel it safe to intrust yourself, your lifelong happiness into his keeping? I would have had you pause until—"

"Until my nature had become warped, suspicious, calculating," I broke in, passionately. "Mother, you are unjust. Would you have me play the spy on Mr. Rossiter's 'character'? What more do I want or care to know than that he loves me, and I return it? As for his worldly connections, if you mean those, don't we already know that the Rossiters are a family at least quite equal to the Thornes, and we may not be *greatly* lowered by the contact?" I said this half sarcastically, for there was pride of lineage caught from old English blood which "came over in the Mayflower," in my mother's veins.

The unwonted vehemence of my manner must have surprised and pained my mother, for I saw a clear, wide uplifting of the usually drooping eyelids, but she replied, in a calm, yet resolved voice: "My daughter, I acknowledge that Mr. Rossiter is well-bred, gentlemanly, and of unexceptionable family, intellectual, and pleasing in manner; yet, did it never occur to you that a man may be all this, and still fall far below the standard of a *Christian, truthful, upright gentleman*?" Ceasing,

she closely scanned my face, as if to note the effect of her words.

"Christian!" Who said Lionel Rossiter pretended to *that*? He is no hypocrite, to make pretence to what he has not, and I like candor in any one; but who says he is not—is not—"My lips quivered with fear or anger so that I could not speak the word. "Who has so belied him?" I felt the fire-sparks leap from my eyes; the volcano was in its first throes of labor.

"Mildred"—and my mother's voice quivered, and had a touch of pity—"it pains me that I have to bid my daughter beware of her lover. I am sorry—"

"Mother, you insult me!" I said, haughtily, my strong temper roused. "You forget that Mr. Rossiter has sought me for his honorable wife. But why do you deal in subterfuges? why do you not tell me at once the author of this base calumny? though I do not ask you to hope that I shall *credit* it."

"My daughter, I ask you to believe nothing on *my* word. I am sorry that I should have to impart what I must, and more especially sorry that you have betrothed yourself to the man who has not opened to you all his past life; but I had resolved to tell you this before I knew you had taken this step, and it is doubly needful *now*. I have said I ask you to believe nothing on *my* word; but you remember the gentleman who came here yesterday? *He* is a minister of the gospel, and—"

"Yes! that sanctimonious-looking stranger whom I met in the hall? I thought he had a hang-dog look! But I beg pardon, ma'am; you were going to say that he came to you with this precious bit of slander?"

"Mildred, I am surprised and shocked!" My mother's voice was severe. "This is a sad affair! I see that you are too strongly prejudiced to credit what I have no reason to disbelieve, as coming from a man incapable of falsehood, as I regard this most excellent minister of the gospel."

"He has your daughter's thanks, ma'am," I said, bitterly. "It must have been a delectable story he served up to you, this gentleman 'incapable of falsehood.' A paragon, really! I wish I had observed him more closely, as it may never be my fate to meet one of that ilk again. But I forget that I am again interrupting you in this revelation concerning Mr. Rossiter, which I would like to hear merely for the sake of disbelieving."

"Mildred"—and my mother's voice trembled—"if you are determined not to believe the

story, it only shows how completely that artful, selfish man has fascinated you. This gentleman's visit was from the best, most generous of motives. 'He had heard of Mr. Rossiter's visits here, and would save my daughter much unhappiness. But perhaps Miss Thorne will be loath to believe,' he said. 'It is a painful thing to come on an errand like this, to tell a lady that the man who woos her has once been—'

"Stop! No, I will *not* believe! tell me *nothing!*" I cried, passionately. "This man's story, whatever it is, is a base lie! Lionel Rossiter has asked me to become his happiness for all the future, and I *will!* I believe he is all that is good and noble."

"God grant it, if you are so resolved, Mildred," said my mother, solemnly. "He may permit it to be so. I pray it will be thus from my soul; but I fear it is a risk."

"I am not afraid, however," I replied, scornfully, angrily; "be the risk on my own head. I thank Heaven I am not so cold or calculating.

And *what* do you bring against him? That there is some passage in his past life whereof he has not told me? What of this? I dare affirm that past is an outer world to him *now*; so shall it be to me! Perhaps he *has* erred; yet, if so, it is no more than thousands of others have done, *are* doing daily. Such have been redeemed, and I, with my great love, will redeem *him*. The world, the lying, censorious, malicious world, what does it know, what *can* it know of the temptations, and, if sinning, of the remorse, of a nature like Lionel Rossiter's? I will stand between him and it; I will beat back this prying, curious, greedy-eyed, miserable world, and shield him from it. Tell this person who sought you with a tale he *dared* not bring to me, that he is mistaken in your daughter—that Mildred Thorne is troth-plight with Lionel Rossiter—that she will not fear to marry him, and follow his fortunes to the world's end, if need be!" And, trembling with arrogant passion, I flung myself from the apartment.

(Conclusion next month.)

THE ORDEAL; OR, THE SPRING AND MIDSUMMER OF A LIFE.

BY ALICE B. HAVEN.

(Continued from page 334.)

CHAPTER III.

"Coming 'round to tea, Austin?"

"Does any one expect me?"

"I don't know who 'any one' is. Lucy told me to be sure to ask you, and father seconded the motion."

So the two young men walked off arm in arm, talking of the chances for valedictorian, soon to be decided, the prospects of "the United Brothers," their favorite society, and the boating-club some of the fellows wished to establish.

Mr. Bradstreet welcomed them to the tea-table, and sat there listening to all their boyish jokes and opinions, saying kind things to Carrol of his good prospect for the first honor, and finally telling him that, when he was tired of Lucy's piano and the chess-board, he should be glad to see him in his library. He was a generous, kind-hearted man, who had not forgotten his own youth, and he lived it over again in the freshness of these young lives—in the bright blush that kindled upon Lucy's face when Carrol was commended, in the Jonathan and David devotion of the two students, and all their little piques and ambitions, looking upon the honors of Commencement Day as if the interests of a nation were at stake, and the applause of the whole community awaiting the fortunate men, or the execrations of posterity reserved for the idler of his class.

Out of his counting-house, Mr. Bradstreet's chief pleasure was the happiness of his children. The stately home had lost its greatest charm when their mother, with whom and for whom it was planned, had been carried forth to her burial from it. Lucy was very like her, in face, in voice, in all her gentle, yet decided ways, in her quiet good sense, as well as her feminine grace. Lucy must never be crossed in anything. It cost the father much less to check and restrain Henry's quick, headstrong impulses than to deny Lucy a flower she had set her heart on. The beautiful grounds were kept up to their original elegance to gratify her taste, rather than his pride; the greenhouse, with its wealth of tropical flowers, was at her command. And yet Lucy Bradstreet was unselfish and unspoiled. There are some flowers

that open more perfectly in the broad sunshine than with the succeeding light and shade that belong to others.

Had Mr. Bradstreet forgotten his usual wisdom when he brought these two young lives in such close companionship? The dearest thing on earth, Lucy's happiness—had a weak indulgence brought it in jeopardy? It would seem so, that evening above all others, when he had shut himself up in his library, not to walk with the wisdom of the past, or take the bright, hopeful voice of the present for companionship, but to go over, with pen and pencil, the day's operations, count up the thousands he would gain by the morning's fortunate investment, and recongratulate himself on the cautious financiering that had evaded a threatened loss.

Hal Bradstreet had his own engagements, too—a pending rehearsal of the serenade his ladylove was to receive, in connection with the ladyloves of five other amateurs, whose ardor had undertaken to conquer the difficulties of an adagio in E minor, no trifling obstacle to these unscientific musicians.

The soft May evening, the first true spring day of the season, had allowed open windows and unfurled the great buds of the horse-chestnut-trees of the avenue, the month going out in a flush of loveliness and the calm of early summer. There were no lamps called for; it was moonlight again, and the opal rays of the sunset had mingled so softly with its silver that the white keys of the piano at which Lucy sat had not grown dusky, though dim shadows slept on the velvet carpet. There was a soft rustle of muslin drapery at the tall windows opening on the lawn in its first vernal freshness, a glimmer of carved gilding from cornice and ceiling, a gleam of the white limbed statue in the opposite niche, and again the subtle breath of rare flowers scattered profusely in every vase and goblet of delicate Sevres or curious Bohemian workmanship throughout the room; above all, that low, delicious melody of voice and instrument, snatches of half-remembered songs, and murmuring preludes, and wandering chords, as memory or fancy guided the slender hands.

No wonder that the brave purpose of the young man's heart melted under these enchantments, and he forgot the repeated vows of self-restraint and self-denial he had imposed upon will and emotion. He was leaning near the instrument, and presently bent down his head upon his clasped hands, and gave himself up to dreams of delicious possibilities.

How many veritable lives had gained as lofty prizes, as far beyond their reach! What was the use of talent, and resolve, and energy, if it could not carve out fortune? And Lucy loved him; yes, he could not doubt that, and she would be true and wait for him, as many another true heart had done, and when he could make for her a home like this, she would come to him and be his own, and life should flow on all brightness. But even in the midst of heated vision, the slow and solemn chords into which Lucy had glided seemed to bear the burden of an anthem he had heard when they buried poor Richmond, their classmate: "For man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain; he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them. *This is not your rest.*" But he drove the echo down, and went on with his dream again. How the opening-door jarred upon his feverish pulses. The dream was over; it was late, much later than he supposed, and Mr. Bradstreet had sent for him.

"Shall I say good-night, Lucy, or will you be here when I come out again?"

"I will wait."

The simple words seemed like a prophecy to his excited mood; but then a chill suddenly broke the charm. Mr. Bradstreet must have a special reason for wishing this interview. He had made such a point of it, perhaps he had seen all that was passing, and was displeased. But he was unchanged in manner towards him? Still, that would be Mr. Bradstreet's way; he would not give unnecessary pain or be rudely uncourteous, however he was offended. So with the fear of sudden banishment, or reproof at least, darkening down upon the bright visions of the last hour, he followed the measured footsteps of the old servant.

Coming from the dusky light of the drawing-room, the glare of the library lamps almost blinded him. He did not know it, but his eyes shone feverishly, and there was a bright spot upon either cheek that would have gone like an arrow to his mother's heart, if she could have seen him at this moment, it was so like the hectic she had watched in his father's face for years.

Mr. Bradstreet, composed and self-complacent, filled up the compass of his great library chair, and motioned him to another on the opposite side of the oblong table. Carelessly twirling a carved paper-folder, the souvenir of foreign travel, he did not look like the stern or offended father Carol had prepared himself to meet. Perhaps he thought it best to hold up the whole affair in a trifling, playful light, and not dignify it with a grave seriousness; but it was no child's play, no fancy of the moment, to be cast aside at the bidding of any one, and Carol's spirit rose with the thought, and the remembrance that Mr. Bradstreet had ever tacitly sanctioned their friendship.

"Your father has been dead some years, I believe?" This was the merchant's cautious opening, for business, like chess, teaches a preliminary lightness to a grave combination.

"Nearly nine years, sir," said Carol, greatly wondering, while indignant pride went down, down with the kindness of the words and manner.

"Have you any near relations that you look to to give you a start in life?"

"No, sir, not one. My mother is all in all to me; I owe her my education—but you know that, sir."

"I think I have heard Henry speak of it; but she cannot do any more for you. A woman knows nothing of the business world; her influence is confined to the fireside." And Mr. Bradstreet looked towards the illustrated copy of Longfellow, with a vague remembrance of something the poet had said of

*"Sitting by the fireside of the heart
Feeding its flames;"*

only, of course, he thought he had said it better, for what does a poet know of terseness and brevity, which is the soul of business.

"Yes, sir."

"So you have no plans for the future?"

He could not give assent, though it was evidently expected. The glow of passion had dimmed the outlines of his purpose, obliterated them for the moment, but the question brought them forth again with a startling boldness, as some faded inscriptions start to life suddenly, with their ancient clearness, when brought in contact with a chemical test. He had gone through a strong conflict since that winter's night; conflicts, repeated daily, of soul and spirit, with earthly cravings and natural human weakness. Sometimes this battle with self had shaken him so that he could scarcely fix his mind on the duties of the hour, and had left its traces in his face, dark shadows and a

sharpened outline, that were accounted for to others by the knowledge of his incessant studiousness. But the voice of conscience and of God had called him out of the stillness of his own soul, and from the words of Holy Writ, to leave all and follow the footsteps of Christ in ministering to the souls of fellow mortals who were crowding out of life into eternity, with no great sense of its awful meaning, such as had been laid on him. He could not say his future was all undefined.

"No definite plans, I mean," said Mr. Bradstreet, waiting politely for the response.

"No, sir." He could at least say nothing definite.

"I am glad to hear it, my boy; for I think I can make a proposition which will suit us both. I have watched you for some time, Austin." (He knew that very well.) "And I have seen nothing to shake my original opinion that you have great business capabilities. A little late to begin with the routine of a counting-house; your real merchant should begin at the lowest round of the ladder, and then he always knows where to plant his foot, so to speak. But you have industry and good sense to bring you up; and method, which is almost everything; and energy, which will become enterprise in the proper field. I wish Hal had half the groundwork."

"No better heart, sir. He will grow out of his boyishness. He only needs a good influence. He's easily led just now."

"That's the worst of it—the worst of it. It doesn't help a man, when he's gone to the devil, to say he was easily led there, though it answers for an excuse while he's going. But you kept him straight the last two years, and that, and some other things, have put it into my head to offer to take you into my counting-house, and some day, perhaps, into the business."

The light, and the drab and gilt volumes behind Mr. Bradstreet, the square, resolute looking head of the merchant, and his kindly face, now beaming with interior and exterior satisfaction, grew confused and misty for a moment. Here was his dream almost realized, an opening that many a rich man would have coveted for his son, such as is offered but once in a lifetime. Was not his mother's favorite scheme, of a watchful Providence over the fatherless, realized? How she would rejoice at the unlooked for prosperity!

Would she? There rose up the questioning voice of inward monition. Had she not other hopes for him, unspoken but recognized uncon-

sciously? Mr. Bradstreet had done a noble and generous deed; he had a right to expect thanks and happiness as its result. He only saw the young man's face bent down, hidden from him, and heard a low groan, as if of bodily anguish.

"Austin, am I mistaken in you? Is there any reason for this hesitancy?" And the tone had a shade of coldness, though he did not mean it should have.

"You are very good, sir; so good that I do not know how to answer you."

"Oh, is that all? Well, thanks are the last thing I want. Only keep Hal straight, and one of these days"—for why should he stint his good intentions? the boy's family was excellent for all their poverty—"make my little Lucy happy." The kind man's voice was almost tremulous as he said this. The face of Lucy's mother, with its sweet, approving smile, seemed to look out from her own shadowy nook close beside him.

"Lucy!" And the bowed face was lifted up with a sudden, eager, almost incredulous look.

"You love her, don't you? And I dare say she's told you she loves you, before this."

"No, sir, never! How could she, when my lips were sealed?"

"I believed in your honor; but there are other tell-tales than words. If I had not nursed up this plan, I should have sent you out of the house long ago. But I can't bear to deny Lucy anything. It cuts me, even to see a downcast look on her face. Bless her heart!"

If he had been untrue at that moment, the future would never have atoned for it. Little we know, when the hour of temptation comes upon us, who is feeling our peril, and praying that our faith fail not. The vibrating tenderness of a mother's love had caught the first thrill of dissonance, a hidden, nameless warning moved her that night.

"I must not deceive you, sir, even for Lucy." Oh, must he give her up! Position, wealth, love! turn away from all! But he went on quickly, lest his courage should fail him: "It has seemed right to me that I should choose my father's profession."

"He was a clergyman, I think. Very honorable, very excellent men among the clergy; but hunted to death by poverty, half of them, and their wives, too. People are beginning to open their eyes, it's true, but that won't do for you—for Lucy, at all events, brought up as she's been. She'll tell you so. Go ask her about it." For Mr. Bradstreet thought it was a boyish fancy, very natural, and very proper when nothing else offered; and the best way

to put it out of his mind was to send him to Lucy.

"But, Mr. Bradstreet—"

"There, there, we won't talk any more at present. I don't ask you for yes or no to-night; it's a poor bargain that hasn't been slept upon. Go see what Lucy says to it." And he waved the young man out of the room.

Very slowly—though he needed no guide to Lucy's presence—Carrol came back to the quiet room where she was waiting with an impatient eagerness. She, too, had her own doubts and fears as to this interview. But it had made her look into her own heart, and the dread of separation had but shown her how entirely it was given up to what had once been a girlish fancy. He did not see her, for a moment, but stood still, as the door closed behind him, shading his eyes with his hand. If she was gone, would it not be ominous? How childish! But she was there still, and came quickly towards him, laying her hand upon his arm.

"What is it, Carrol? Is there any trouble?"

"Lucy, your father says I may tell you that I love you." And he drew her close, close to him, the upturned face looking still into his.

"Oh, can I give you up? Does God require it? Do I not mistake duty? Tell me that I do!"

It was not strange that, with his father's example and his mother's influence, with a life-training in the school of self-denial, Carrol Austin should decide against his own happiness for the bare command of conscience; but it was a marvel that brought the indulged and petted girl to say, when he had told her all, "I should be miserable if I thought I had made you false to yourself, to what you think is right. We should never be happy, but it is so hard! You know I love you, Carrol, you know I do, but I cannot help you decide. I do not want to influence you by a feather's weight."

They parted, sadly enough for young lovers, in the first hour of mutual confidence, and whose future lay with themselves! Who could decide for them?

CHAPTER IV.

"HAVE you been to the post-office, Ben?"

It was a quarter to nine. Already little feet were beginning to patter upon the door-step, and in a few moments more Mrs. Austin must take her post in the school-room. She had been looking for Ben's curly head the last ten minutes, with that eagerness with which we

watch for the messenger of good or evil tidings, when the balance is still undecided. It was two days since Carrol's weekly letter had been due, the letter in answer to the one it had cost her so much to write; and he might be ill, he was so anxious not to disappoint her in his scholarship. He might be overworked, and unable to write.

"There! I forgot! But here's the things—my new shoes, and the rice and the fresh eggs. I'll be off again like a lamplighter."

"My dear child!"—and an unwonted feeling of impatience stirred Mrs. Austin's tone—"I wish you were not so heedless! Do keep your thoughts about you!"

But Ben was off, and his mother, with a parting household charge to Ellen, who came into the school-room an hour later, turned to her daily task. It was more wearisome than usual, partly because of a hard lesson in syntax that her older girls would not try to comprehend, and then her eyes would wander towards the window, looking down the street towards the post-office. Ben was so long! But he came just as the composition class presented their ambitious essays on "Time" and "History," "The Elements" and "Why do we Study?" She could only glance at the envelopes of her letters, and assure herself that one was addressed in the finished, careful hand of her son, and see that the other was from a stranger by its unknown post-mark and the businesslike flourishes that followed her name. It was very hard to control her thought, and enter into the construction of sentences that announced, with a great degree of circumlocution, the important facts that "we study to improve ourselves," and that "history is the record of past events," or to clip the redundant drapery in which the young lady who expatiated on "Sunset" had clothed the "gorgeous clouds of crimson and gold that cradle the declining luminary." Thence to the infant class, with their demurely folded hands, but wandering eyes and absent thoughts, who could distinguish no difference between A and O, with their pertinacious, irritating mistakes and blundering guesses. Even when school was dismissed, there were two girls to be detained for misconduct and expostulated with, and the copy-books of a class to be prepared for the afternoon. With Ben clamorous for dinner, and Clara exhibiting a great, gaping tear in her second-best dress, that no one but her mother could darn so as to preserve its respectability, school-time and sun-bonnets arrived again, with even the seals unbroken!

So it happened that she was quite alone,

with the last footfall of the last scholar sounding under her window, before she opened the letter; and then she laid her head down upon the desk a moment, with an inward cry for strength, before she trusted herself to read it.

There were two dates, the first several days old.

"Mother, I have a long story to tell you; I scarcely know where to commence. I have had a long talk with Mr. Bradstreet more than once; but at first I was at his house, at tea, and he sent for me to come into his library. I thought of a hundred things as I went along—that he was going to forbid me the house, and tell me that I must not think of Lucy. My mind was all in a whirl, for I had been thinking of her more than ever lately, thinking that she might be my wife some day—yes, mother, I did—and how you would love her, and she would love you, for she has no mother, you know, and she likes nothing so well as to have me talk about you and my sisters; she never had a sister. Mr. Bradstreet sent for me into the library, but it was not for any unkind or harsh purpose. I have always told you that he was not proud or overbearing, and he proved it by making me an offer to take me into his counting-house. It seemed Providential, mother."

"O Carroll!" And the dream of years seemed swept away, as Mrs. Austin turned the leaf. It is so hard to find that our best desires and purposes, seemingly in accordance to God's will, have been set aside by Him for plans of His own ordaining.

"It seemed Providential, mother." She glanced back at the words again. If it was His providence, though it broke her last "idol to her face," she would not reject it. "I thought perhaps the blessing upon the fatherless, that you have always said so much of to me, had moved Mr. Bradstreet's heart to place me in a way to help my brothers and sisters, and, first of all, to relieve you for your hard and busy life. And then Lucy! I have not told you all. He said he knew I loved Lucy and would make her happy, and some day he would give her to me, too. I don't know why, but *that* made me feel that it was a temptation. It came into my mind like a flash, how Satan carried the Saviour to a high mountain, and showed Him 'all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them,' and promised to give Him everything, if He would worship him. Everything seemed placed within my grasp. It was too much of a temptation; it betrayed itself; I could not fight away the feeling.

"I had been thinking all winter, ever since Christmas, that I ought to devote my life entirely to God's service. It was no sudden fancy. I have often thought of it before, even when I was no older than Ben; but this year, knowing that it was the last one here, the thought came back and back to me so often that I wonder I have not written to you about it before. The only thing was, I could not bring my mind to decide, and I did not want to trouble you with my doubts. I had almost made up my mind to write to you after my birthday, for I did vow, in the stillness of my heart, that day, if God would make me His servant, I would 'fight manfully under his banner,' but something held me back for sealing it, even by telling you; yet I know now that it was no less binding. Do you not see how the temptation put on the face of duty, as well as inclination? I thought of you first, of the toiling hands and head that had never rested for my sake, of the home you were born to and I could make for you again, of Ben's education, and all I could do for my sisters, and Lucy at last, when I had earned the right to make her happy. Oh, mother, you do not know, even you, with all your love for me, cannot tell what a struggle it was, knowing Lucy loved me, too; and, though she would not say a word, I knew what she *hoped* I would choose.

"I did not go near the house again. I have only seen her once since. I shut myself up in my room. I did as people used to do in old times, when they tried to discern God's will and empty themselves of selfish hindrances to it. I fasted, and prayed, and thought, and read my Bible, and, mother, I am not ashamed to tell you that I wept. Sometimes I walked the room pressing my hands against my head, for it seemed as though my brain would burst. The sacrifice seemed too great! I could not give up Lucy. Then your letter came. Oh what a comfort! 'At evening time, there was light!' It came like a message of peace, like the leaves of healing to Christian after he fought with Apollyon, in the Valley of Humility! I cannot tell you what it was to me, or what it was not. It seemed easy then, no not easy, but less impossible, to give up the thought of Lucy's love, and the worldly part of the temptation all vanished.

"I went to Mr. Bradstreet, and told him that I could not accept his kindness. I knew he would not understand it, and he did not. He felt hurt, more about Lucy than because I was ungrateful; he seemed to think I could not love her as much as I said I did, or I would

not throw her away for a 'fanatical idea.' He was right about my not coming there any more, though it has been just like home this winter. He said, and I know it is so, that, even if he should give his consent for Lucy to marry a poor minister, he could not afford to take enough out of his business and settle on her to make her as comfortable as she ought to be, and I should be only selfish in asking her to wait. But he let me see her again, and that was a great comfort; for, though I told her I hoped she would be very happy, and marry, and forget me, it will be something to think of as long as I live, that she did love me and understand why I gave her up, and did not try to change me. Only once she laid her head on my shoulder and sobbed as if her heart was breaking, and said, 'Oh, Carrol, is death any harder than giving you up!' It did not seem to me that it could be harder to either of us than to say good-by forever. But the struggle is all over now; and, in a little while, I shall not be here to keep it in remembrance, and the pain will die away. I can do all the more good if I never marry, perhaps, and I can make *you* happy. My choice will make you happy, I know.

"I almost forgot to tell you that I have the Valedictory! Only think of it! When, six months ago, I should have telegraphed it to you, I believe. If you could *only* be here on Commencement Day. I cannot give it up, yet. It will be nothing to me; I have no one here to care—that I ought to feel would care, I mean."

Long, long after she had finished this letter, Mrs. Austin remembered the other which had come that morning. She had her wish, but what an ordeal her child had passed to reach the goal she had pointed out to him! It passed through her mind again and again, all he had suffered and struggled against, and his noble self-conquest, before she came back to what he had said of Commencement Day. She had always secretly hoped to be there and share in his triumph. The wish had been the one darling self-indulgence of her life for the past two years; but she had failed to lay aside the means to accomplish it. Her habit of prudent foresight had, by God's blessing, helped her to meet every want for herself and her children. There was even a little sum accumulating in the hands of a kind friend, against unforeseen need, but she did not dare to draw upon it, any more than if it had belonged to a stranger. Yet it seemed hard to give up the journey, especially hard when her boy seemed so to need her com-

fort and sympathy. She said to herself, with an almost rebellious sigh, it was only one with her life, always to be chastened and restrained, even in what seemed most lawful.

But the other letter! Now that Carrol's was at last refolded, she touched it as she looked for the envelope. It was short, and the signature unknown to her. There was an inclosure, which she did not unfold:—

"DEAR MADAM: The year before your husband's death, he lent me \$20 to come to the place where I am now residing. He looked upon it as a gift, I know, for there was then little hope that I should ever repay it. I have always intended to, and do so now, inclosing you a check for twenty-five dollars, the original sum, with interest."

So it is in life, that our hopes are never so near fulfilment as when we think them quite lost.

(Conclusion next month.)

THE WIDOW.

BY LILLY LEE.

EDITH GREYSON was a widow! Very sad is the sound of that word; it tells us of blighted affections, trials, and sorrows, that none but they who have quaffed the bitter dregs of separation can appreciate. A widow! The death-knell of hope and love comes booming heavily across the heart, and the tear-drop trembles upon the eyelid, as we glance at the pale face and sable robes of her who is left to tread life's pathway alone, for it is a rough and thorny one for her who has no strong, loving arm to support, no cheerful voice to encourage, no warm, throbbing breast upon which to press the aching head.

Edith Greyson was a widow indeed, and, as she pressed her small white fingers upon her brow, and stood thoughtfully by the side of the little crib where nestled a rosy boy of three summers, the tear-drops fell thick and fast upon the face of the little sleeper, and told of sorrow, for Edith had loved with all the fervent affection of a trusting heart him who, two years before, had pressed his last kiss of love upon her cheek, and gone forth to struggle manfully in his toilsome vocation, and returned borne upon a couch, a corpse! He had overtasked his strength, and fell a victim to his ambition.

Poor Edith! The shadows which fell upon her cottage home were dark; the only ray of sunshine was her baby boy, and, as she clasped him to her throbbing heart, she prayed for life, that she might live for him alone. He was very beautiful, and, as weeks and months passed away, the poignancy of grief subsided, and the tendrils of affection which death had so rudely wrenched asunder twined more closely around her child. He was her all.

Mrs. Greyson had been reared in the lap of ease, and when she gave herself, a young, gay bride, to William Greyson, it was in direct opposition to the will of her uncle, who had adopted her, when an orphan, as his own child, and she had been an alien to his house ever afterwards; but now that the cause of his resentment was gone, he welcomed again his niece and her baby to his hearthstone, and the little Willie soon became his pet, and the eye of his mother brightened as she saw, day by day, how strongly the old man's affections were centring around her fatherless boy. She loved her uncle,

but she knew that, in order to be happy, his will must be her law. It was two years since Edith had returned to her childhood's home, and the memory of her husband was as bright and her love as fervent as when she had parted the raven curls from his icy brow, when the death chills had gathered and stilled the glad voice forever.

The shades of night had gathered round the luxurious home where she had returned. The folds of the heavy damask curtains hung heavily over the spacious windows, and the burning coals cast a pleasant light around the richly furnished apartment. Her boy lay upon the sofa by her side, while her fingers were threading the glossy curls which half concealed the little face that rested upon her knee. Memory was busy with the past, and, as she gazed upon the little one, she tried to trace some resemblance to him whose name he bore, her loved and lost. Her uncle opened the door. So busily had she been engaged in her retrospection that she heeded not his approach. Seating himself by the glowing fire, in his luxurious chair, he turned to his niece with a smile.

"Dreaming again, Edith? That is a bad habit for one so young as you are; it makes you melancholy. The future is bright before you."

A heavy sigh was the only response, for Edith's future was darkened.

"Robert Ellerton has returned from Italy. He has not only made a name, but a fortune, since he left us, and he brings back the same warm, free heart that he carried away with him. He is a fine young gentleman."

"His mother and sisters will rejoice at his return. Poor Mrs. Ellerton has pined for him sadly; I fear she will not enjoy his society long."

"Yes, I hear she is failing fast; but I am glad Robert has come back. By the way, Edith, I have brought you home a present, and one for Willie, too. Why, the little rogue is asleep!" And, taking the little sleeper in his arms, he playfully tossed a package into his mother's lap, who mechanically untied the twine which fastened the paper folds. A beautiful light silk unrolled from the paper, and fell upon the sofa.

"This is not for me, uncle! You know I do not wear colors."

"I know you have not, Edith, but your sables are rusty, and it is time they were laid aside; two years is long enough to suit the most fastidious taste or conscience either. No tears, Edith; the time must come, and as well now as ever. You must have it made up to suit my taste; and here is this for my pet." And he shook open a bright crimson velvet, and tossed it over the chubby form. "I have indulged you a long time; I want to forget the past, and have you yourself once more."

"That cannot be, dear uncle," said she, glancing at her child.

"No, Edith, that is a token, to be sure, that we none of us can forget, or wish to, either; but I insist upon it that you lay aside that everlasting black. I will choose you some other dress-goods, and you must have Rachel Simmonds come immediately and fit them for you."

Edith knew that remonstrance would be useless, and it was with a heavy heart and tearful face that she bore the little boy to her chamber that night. It was a hard struggle for her loving heart to lay aside the outward signs of her sorrow, for the young, gentle widow was a sincere mourner.

There was a bright fire burning in the cozy parlor of Mrs. Ellerton, the thin white curtains were drawn across the windows, and the sofa was wheeled up before the stove; the arm-chair that occupied the corner was comfortable. Two young ladies were employed with their needles, while a young gentleman with a really foreign air was lounging upon the sofa opposite to where his mother was bolstered up with snowy pillows in the easy-chair, which had been arranged by the hands of love. The astral lamp shed a mellow light over the happy group. Mrs. Ellerton had for months been an invalid, and it was at her earnest request that her only son had been summoned home from Europe, that she might look upon his face once again upon earth. Years before, her husband had died, leaving but a small income for the support of his little family; but, by the strictest economy, she had educated her children, and still retained and resided in the home of her youth. It was a great affliction to her when her son left his home, and for a long time she would not give her consent; and not till Robert had frequently urged and argued with her, did he wring a reluctant acquiescence to his plans. But he was safely returned, bearing with him all that a

mother's heart could crave for her only son. Wealth and fame were his, but still she saw that he was not happy.

"I wonder where Mrs. Greyson is; she has not called in for a long time," said Abba Ellerton, as she rearranged her mother's pillows, and reseated herself at the centre-table. "She should have been one of the first to welcome Robert home, for he was one of her husband's particular friends. I will call in the morning, and see what has become of her."

It was well that Abba did not look up from her work to note the expression upon her brother's face, as she mentioned Mrs. Greyson's name; but her mother did, and it roused a train of thought which was not altogether pleasant, for she had always secretly believed that Edith's marriage had more to do with Robert's absence than he was willing to allow even to her ears.

After a moment's pause, he inquired, with an indifferent voice, "Where does Mrs. Greyson live now?"

His mother replied, with a smile, "At her uncle's; he took her home immediately after her husband's funeral, and it is rumored that he will make the little Willie his heir."

"Had Edith Greyson a child? You never mentioned it in your letters."

"O yes, Robert; he is one of the sweetest little fellows in the world."

"How long is it since Greyson died? I liked never to have heard of that."

"Somewhat over two years. Edith is quite inconsolable."

"Of course; that was a love-match, you know; there are but precious few such upon earth. I presume no one ever doubted for a moment that Edith Layton loved her husband; that she married him was convincing proof."

"There was a great disparity between them, I conclude. Mr. Layton was exceedingly angry, and never spoke to his niece till after Greyson's death."

"Well, he did not live long to enjoy the society of his sweet wife. Does the boy resemble Greyson or his mother? They were both handsome, I remember."

"He is the image of his mother. By the way, Ellen, they mentioned, when I was at the dressmaker's, that Edith was going to lay aside her weeds this winter."

"Impossible! Why, I have heard her often say she should always wear them."

"I remember it, but Rachel Simmonds had just returned from Mr. Layton's, and she had

a multitude of dresses, de laines, and thibets, and one splendid light brocade; but she mentioned that Edith said it was only in compliance with her uncle's wishes that she consented to lay aside the badges of widowhood, and she seemed very sad in doing it."

"I do not think there is any necessity for her wearing any outward symbols to denote her sorrow at her bereavement."

"No, girls, Mrs. Greyson has mourned most sincerely her husband's untimely death. We all understand that Mr. Layton is arbitrary in his will, and I wonder more that he permitted Edith to dress in black so long than that he requires her to lay it aside now, for he disliked her husband so much."

"Well, I think, if you are able to be left with Ellen, I will call to-morrow, for I want to see her in weeds once more—she looked so lovely. Will you accompany me, Robert? If I remember aright, Edith was formerly a sweetheart of yours. I believe I have read some pathetic poetry inscribed to Miss E. L."

"Hush, Abba! let bygones alone," said Mrs. Ellerton, in alarm.

"Never mind, mother; time cures all such wounds; I am perfectly heart-whole now. Abba has a very tenacious memory; I wonder if she remembers how to conjugate her verbs as well as she does my poetry."

"I reckon I can tell what tense 'he did love' was in better than I can when 'he will love,' for I believe that Robert never thumbed his grammar so far as to find even 'he may love.' Have you, sir bachelor?"

"I shall not make you my confessor at present, Abba, but I will venture to call with you at Mr. Layton's, if that will do for penance. I met the old gentleman to-day, and he gave me a hearty invitation to call."

"Take care of the conjugation of your verbs, Robert; I shall remember that you call it doing penance to call on sweet Edith Greyson."

"Oh, Abba, you are just like the rest of womankind, doing what you ought not to do, and leaving undone what you ought to have done."

"No, Robert, you must leave off the last part of your sentence, for Abba is very particular in her duties; she is a good daughter."

"I know it well; but I am inclined to think, from what our young minister told me to-day, that he does not think the last part of the sentence ought to be left out. Don't run away, Abba, for I am fully determined to give a bride to the parson before many months."

Mr. Ellerton and his sister did call at Mr.

Layton's, and Edith met them with the frank cordiality of former days, and Robert could hardly realize that five years had passed since he saw her last. The only change perceptible was a shadow upon her brow, that told plainly of heart-trials; but she often alluded to former days, and, although a smile rested upon her lips, the teardrops would glisten in her eyes.

Miss Ellerton inquired for Willie.

"He has gone to ride with Uncle Layton. He is the merriest little elf, Mr. Ellerton, you ever saw; he has his father's joyous disposition."

"And his mother's face," said Abba, rising and walking to the window. "But here the birdie comes; and say, Robert, if you ever saw a better miniature."

A most beautiful child, certainly, was the gladsome boy who bounded across the room, and sprang into his mother's arms to receive her welcome kiss; and so thought Ellerton, as he coaxed him to leave her side, and drew him upon his knee, and parted the golden curls from off the fair, sunny brow. He felt that his sister's eye was fastened upon him, and he was not quite sure himself that he was as heart-whole as he had boasted himself to be the evening before; and he could but acknowledge that the young widow of his youthful friend had stirred emotions in his bosom that the dark-eyed daughters of Italy had pronounced invulnerable; and it was with unfeigned pleasure that he received Mr. Layton's hearty invitation.

"Never mind ceremony with us, Ellerton; we are old friends, you remember. Edith here is somewhat troubled with the blues just now, but she will soon get over them, I trust. It will be a work of charity in you to help her drive them away."

"I will not tax Mr. Ellerton's charity in my behalf, uncle; I remember his invalid mother may have a prior claim."

"I shall be happy to accept Mr. Layton's invitation, and shall regret sincerely if my return should banish such a comfort from my poor mother as she tells me Mrs. Greyson has been ever since her confinement."

"Yes, Mrs. Greyson, mother complains of your neglect lately," said Abba.

"Tell her from me, Abba, that I have not forgotten her."

"Just call and tell your message yourself, for I am so heedless I know I shall forget; you will know then that it is done correctly. I wish you would let me carry Willie off with me. Mother says it is like a ray of sunshine to see his little, glad, merry face in her room."

"But he is so noisy, Abba, it may disturb her; she is so weak."

"Not in the least. Mamma will let him go." And the little fellow bounded away to find his hat, and quickly returned to her side.

"He is very fond of you, Abba. Willie must be a good boy." A tear glistened in her eye as she pressed a kiss upon his lips. He was her all; and none save those who, like her, have drunk the bitterest dregs of sorrow, can tell how the heart loves those whom death has left behind.

"I do not think your *penance* was very severe, Robert," said his sister, as they returned home with the little Willie walking between them, with a tiny hand clasped in one of each. "Really, judging from your face, I should think you were enjoying perfect absolution after confession."

"Come, Abba, a truce, or I shall needs call the parson to absolve you from the sin of tormenting and mischief-making."

"Honestly, now, Robert, what do you think of Mrs. Greyson?"

"I think that Edith Layton was the bud, and Mrs. Greyson the flower."

Very frequent were the calls that young Ellerton made at Mr. Layton's; but, as he was generally accompanied by one of his sisters, Edith never for a moment thought of appropriating them especially to herself; and he found that his own heart was becoming deeply interested in the young widow, while he was confident that she bestowed no thought or attention upon him, only as the brother of her intimate friend, and a favorite companion of her lamented husband. Mr. Layton evidently viewed his calls as the harbinger of a change in Edith's prospects, and spared no pains to propitiate little Willie into the graces of the young gentleman, who already began to love the little prattler for his own sake, as he had done from the first for that of his mother and father.

Edith had laid aside her mourning, and the plain, soft colors she now wore added to her loveliness. It was with an anxious eye that Mrs. Ellerton watched the course which events seemed likely to take. She loved the gentle Edith, next to her own fair daughters, and would gladly have seen her idolized boy wedded to one so good and true; but still she doubted the event. She knew that her own health was rapidly failing, and she was solicitous that Robert should permanently settle at or near home so that his sisters might have a home under his roof when she had passed away.

Six months after Edith had laid aside her mourning, her uncle met her at the dinner-table, with a smile of satisfaction beaming upon his countenance. "So, Edith, I am to be the last one to whom the news of your approaching marriage is to be confided. But allow me to congratulate you upon your choice."

"Uncle, what do you mean?" gasped the poor girl, with a face as colorless as chiselled marble. "My marriage!"

"Why, yes, Edith. Every one supposes you are engaged to Mr. Ellerton."

"It is not so; and I never even thought of it; he was my husband's friend."

"And will probably be his successor. I certainly know of no reason why you should not accept of such a rare chance."

"I shall never marry again. I respect and esteem Mr. Ellerton as a friend; but my heart 'is in the grave.'"

"Nonsense! You were never going to lay aside your mourning; yet we see—"

"I did that to please you, uncle."

"And very probably will marry again for the same good reason. You are too old, Edith, not to see the wisdom of such an arrangement."

"Spare me, uncle. I cannot think of it. Let me live with you."

"Edith, you must lay aside your whimsical sentimentality; and, if you would escape my censure, you will make up your mind to accept Mr. Ellerton's proposals."

"He has made none; and I sincerely hope has never thought of it."

"Well, he has—you may depend upon that."

Mrs. Greyson left the table with trembling steps, and sought her chamber. This, then, was the end.

A month had passed away, and Edith had not met the Ellertons; she had purposely avoided them; and when they called, she had pleaded some excuse for not receiving them. A frown rested upon her uncle's brow, but no farther reference was made to the subject. Mrs. Ellerton was failing gradually, but surely; and she often inquired for Mrs. Greyson; and a shadow rested upon all their hearts. For some days, her daughters had not made an effort to see their friend, and their increasing anxiety for their mother partially diverted their thoughts from her, save when the saddened brow of their brother brought the subject to their minds. And he strove to banish the thought of her, and he often stood gazing upon the thin face of his much loved mother. She had been growing much weaker, and it was

evident would soon pass away. A carriage dashed along the pavement at a fearful speed, and the group turned towards the window. It was Mr. Layton's, and the widow's child was by his side. Dear Willie! One more dreadful spring, and the horse cleared himself from the carriage and flew rather than ran down the street.

Ellerton sprang from the house, and caught the little quivering form in his arms. "Mamma!" With a rapid step, he bore his precious burden towards Mr. Layton's residence, while the insensible form of Mr. Layton followed, borne by the group which speedily gathered around. With a quick step, Abba passed her brother, and ran hurriedly up the steps and flew into Edith's room, while her blanched cheek brought terror to the fond mother's heart. Poor Edith!

She shed no tears as she took her boy from the arms that so tenderly brought the little form; and, as she pressed him to her heart, she knew he must die. One warm kiss upon those parted lips, and the little hand pressed upon her cheek, one struggle, and Edith was all alone. "He was her only child, and she a widow."

That night was a sorrowful one to that household. Edith composed the little limbs to their last rest, and pressed the lids over those once laughing eyes. Robert Ellerton stood by her side, and how gladly would he have folded her to his heart and soothed her great sorrow! Abba remained by her till recalled to her mother. Mr. Layton remained till morning insensible, and when at last he roused from his lethargy, he called for his niece. Ellerton supported her to his couch. His eye brightened as he saw them, and his lips moved—"Willie is in Heaven! Poor girl, all alone! God bless you both." And when the morning's sun broke in glory from the east, its rays fell upon the old man's form robed in the habiliments of the grave. That night Mrs. Ellerton, too, was called to rest.

"I do not ask you, Edith, to give me the love you bore to Mr. Grayson; but I ask for a place in your esteem, for the privilege of protecting you and cheering your loneliness. Long and anxiously have I waited; and now may I not hope? I will not speak of the time when, years ago, I worshipped from afar, and saw my idol placed upon another's shrine. In distant lands I sought to forget my heart's ideal, but 'u vain. I returned home, and found you free.

Hope again budded in my breast, only to be crushed by your coldness; your heart was bound up in your darling boy. I blamed you not, but loved you more, that you so cherished the memory of your husband. I mourned over your dear Willie as if he had been my own, and now months have passed ere I have ventured to plead for a place in your heart. I do not ask you to forget aught your heart holds dear; I only crave the love you can spare."

She placed her hand in his, and he drew her to his bosom.

"My own forever. God deal with me as I do by you!"

"Yours on earth. In Heaven, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in Heaven."

"I loved William Greyson, too; and it is no grief to me that you so fondly remember him to whom you plighted your heart's first love. Speak to me freely of him, and never fear that my heart will chide you, my own, my beautiful!"

Two weeks from that night, a bridal party alighted at the church, and gathered at the altar, where stood the clergyman awaiting its arrival. There was a shadow resting upon the sweet face of the bride, but the fond glance of her husband that met her saddened eye chased it away. The moon was shining brightly as they passed the sacred portals; Edith's eye glanced towards a little grave. A new monument was placed at its head, with an angel with outstretched wings crowning the die. "Gone home" was carved underneath.

"Our Willie," said the happy husband, as he drew his gentle bride to the little mound.

"You did this?" said she, inquiringly, as she traced the familiar lineaments in the exquisite sculpture.

"Yes; for your sake and that of the cherub whom it represents."

"God bless you, my husband!"

Years have passed since the widow's bridal, and who shall say that the solemn vow which she breathed, to love and cherish Robert Ellerton, was not as fervent and true as that which bound her to the heart of William Greyson?

Rosy cheeks and bright eyes gladden the household of Mr. Ellerton, and when they gather round the hearthstone at the still twilight, their mother's eye brightens with pleasure as her husband tells them of dear brother Willie, who is an angel in Heaven.

THE WONDERS OF THE OCEAN.

THE pebbles on the beach are stones with sermons in them. Their rounded forms are the effects of the pounding against each other, by which the ocean extracts from them the chemical ingredients which, in solution, form sea-water. The metaphor is not too bold on which we venture, when we say, that the dashing of the waves is a species of mastication, in which the ocean grinds down the materials which it dissolves and assimilates, and, we had almost said, digests. There is salt in stones. The muriate of magnesia, muriate of lime, sulphate of soda, and chloride of sodium, the ingredients of sea-water, are found in the rocks; and the movements of the waves are the mechanical actions which precede their chemical solution. The destruction of the sea-coasts by frosts and thaws, the corroding of rocks by the weather, and the weakening and splitting of them by perforating shell-fish, are all parts of vast processes by which the vegetable and animal inhabitants of the sea are supplied with the provisions which sustain them. Ariosto poetically called the waves the herds of Neptune, the god of the sea:—

"Neptune's white herds, lowing o'er the deep;"

but it would be nearer the prosaic facts of science to say, the white herds were chewing the cud of their geological and mineralogical provender. Of the great ocean which covers three-fourths of the surface of the globe, those portions are saltiest which are farthest from the fresh water of great rivers, and whose stormy breakers can chew immense blocks and boulders weighing many tons.

"O sea! old sea! who yet knows half
Of thy wonders or thy pride!"

is the exclamation in which a poet melodiously

echoes the feelings of ignorance and mystery with which the ocean has always been regarded by mankind—

"What hid'st thou in thy treasure-caves and cells,
Thou hollow-sounding and mysterious main?"

The truth is, the ocean expresses glorious meanings in a language of which we are comparatively ignorant, and by symbols, only a few of which we can decipher.

"The gentleness of heaven is on the sea;
Listen! the Mighty Being is awake,
And doth, with his eternal motion, make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly."

Science, however, is daily, by little added to little, discovering more and more of the secrets of "the world of waters."

The ocean is many-colored. Geography mentions the White Sea, the Black Sea, and the Red Sea. Poets and voyagers have described green, blue, and milky seas. Water is colorless in small quantities; but in deep columns in the crevasses of ice of the Alps, or in the profound soundings far from land, it displays an azure hue, and is "darkly, deeply, beautifully blue."

The colors of the bottom give their names to the Black and White Seas. Salt in rocks has naturally a reddish tinge, but the ocean has nowhere salt enough for a reddish hue to be given to it by evaporation similar to the blue tinge displayed by congealed water. The Red Sea derives its color from a singular blood-red plant, which consists of hair-like filaments united in the shape of small bottles or boxes, and which is found covering immense regions of snow and sea. A young and intelligent voyager to China, Mr. Henry Grafton Chapman, has recently described the Milky Sea, one of

the rarest aspects of the ocean, an appearance which is due to animal life. In the Indian Ocean, near the Island of Christmas, on the 1st of August, 1854, when the wind had fallen, the moon gone down, and amidst deep darkness, the sea began frothing and effervescing around the vessel like a glass of Seidlitz water.* When a bucket of water was drawn up it was full of animals, which seemed like vermicelli, yellow, alive, and phosphorescent.

The white edge which the breakers display in their spray has been ascribed to the lime in the globules, which is made apparent, for a moment, by the force and shock of the wind and tide, pebbles and beach. The ocean is made of globules, which are of different temperatures, the warmer and lighter ascending to the sur-

face. We have often watched the thin films of the globules of spray when they have decomposed the sun-rays into the simple colors, as the drops in the clouds do in making rainbows, and have thus seen every breaker for an instant crested by an iris. Of a summer evening, after dark, when somewhat belated on the sea-beach, the loungeur may often see the breakers flashing phosphorescently. The glories of phosphorescence on the tropical ocean have been compared to the northern aurora in the skies. Coleridge, in the "Ancient Mariner," says of the phosphorescent animals:—

"Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire;
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire."